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FORBIDDEN PLANET

Volume 8 Number 2/Volume 8 Number 3

Klaatu Barada Nikto



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Alien languages spoken here! "Klaatu Barada Nikto" is the most famous phrase ever spoken by an extraterrestrial, actor Michael Rennie as Klaatu in the 1951 film THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL. If you enjoyed this issue devoted to the making of FORBIDDEN PLANET, then you'll want to read Steve Rubin's detailed behind-the-scenes story of the production of THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL, one of the great science fiction film classics of all time, directed by Robert Wise, who is now at work bringing STAR TREK to the screen. Published more than three years ago, this rare back issue is now in very limited supply, but is being offered as a free gift while the supply lasts to all new subscribers who order twelve issues of CINEFANTASTIQUE. This detailed production history of the film includes material from interviews with Robert Wise, producer Julian Blaustein, screenwriter Edmund H. North, composer Bernard Herrmann, special effects technician L. B. Abbott, original story author Harry Bates, and others involved in the making of this remarkable film. It's the most complete, accurate and comprehensive article ever published on the production, and the issue features a beautiful full color cover by artist Vincent Di Fate, and behind-the-scenes, special effects and production stills, many of which are in full color! If you ordered this back issue separately, it would cost $9, but it's yours absoultely free for taking a twelve issue subscription, if you act now. Due to the limited supply on hand, this offer is restricted to new subscribers only, and is not available to current subscribers who renew or extend their present subscriptions. By subscribing for twelve issues, you'll save $5 over the newsstand price, and receive your copies direct in the mail, protected by sturdy envelopes, weeks before they appear on sale. Subscriptions begin with Vol 8 No 4 in July, featuring a revealing interview with director Richard Donner on the problems filming SUPERMAN, George Pal on the preproduction of Philip Wylie's THE DISAPPEARANCE, and a full color behind-the-scenes article on filming the model animation visual effects for PLANET OF DINOSAURS. Order now and also receive a free full color poster of Vincent Di Fate's cover art for this issue (shown below), which is sent unfolded in a sturdy mailing tube!

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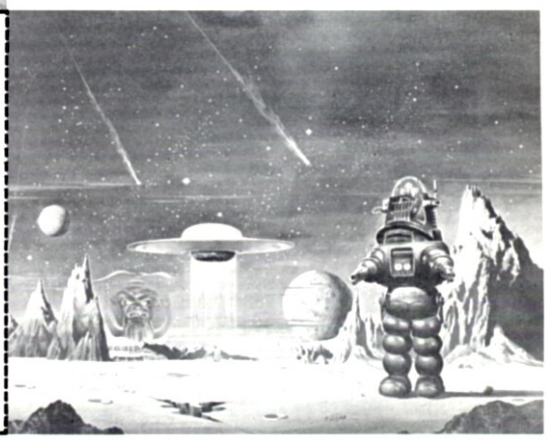
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SPRING

SENSE OF WONDER
by Frederick S. Clarke

After doing double issues on STAR WARS and CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND, we thought it would be both fitting and interesting to go into the same kind of detail on FORBIDDEN PLANET, the direct forerunner of today's big-budget science fiction films. Whereas production illustrator Ralph McQuarrie is renowned for his work on STAR WARS, the preproduction artwork of Mentor Huebner, his counterpart on FORBIDDEN PLANET, is unknown—until now. Although we're all experts on motion control and can explain in minute detail how they flew the Mothership and the Millenium Falcon, who can say more than a few words about how Space Cruiser C-57D hovered in for a landing on Altair IV? And while R2D2 and C3P0 are household letters and numbers, the story behind the creation of Robby the Robot, a concept that revolutionized Hollywood's thinking about mechanical men, has never been told before. The man who holds Steven Spielberg's hat gets a screen credit today, but back at MGM in 1955, only department heads and those with enough clout to fight for it got any recognition. No special interest magazines existed then to acknowledge the contributions of the artists and technicians who pioneered the idea of building science fiction in three dimensions on a soundstage. Their identities and the work that they did on FORBIDDEN PLANET are reported in this issue for the first time.

Special emphasis is given to documenting the production design of art director Arthur Lonergan, as concepts for the film evolved from the script stage to final construction. The surface of another planet has never been recreated on a soundstage to match the attention to detail and otherworldly quality of the sets representing Altair IV. The special effects for the film, supervised by A. Arnold Gillespie, are discussed at length for the first time, from miniature work, to matte paintings, to the genesis and creation of the spectacular Id sequence and the other cel animation effects supplied by Joshua Meador. The special effects and production design of FORBIDDEN PLANET hold up as well today as they did twenty-three years ago. It is only the superficial characters and improbable humor of Cyril Hume's screenplay, and the slow pacing and unimaginative direction of Fred McLeod Wilcox which prevent the film from achieving its full potential. In that respect, science fiction films have not improved much since, despite all the much-vaunted technological improvements. □

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Front Cover: Vincent DiFate captures the wonder of Altair IV from FORBIDDEN PLANET :Back Cover







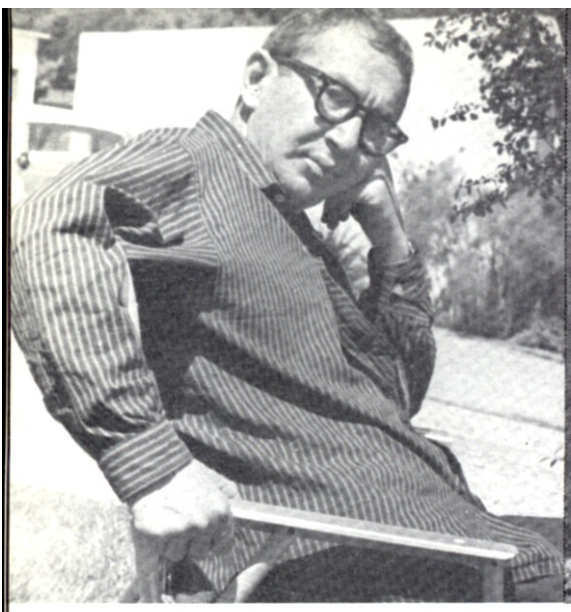


THE PRODUCTION HISTORY OF THE FIRST FILM TO CAPTURE THE ESSENCE OF THE SCIENCE FICTION GENRE AS TOLD BY THE PEOPLE WHO CREATED IT. FORBIDDEN PLANET IS RARELY MATCHED, EVEN TODAY, IN ITS SCOPE, BEAUTY AND BOUNDLESS IMAGINATION.

Right: Robby the Robot waves "Hello" from Altair IV. Hollywood effects man Bill Malone built this exact replica in 1972 from the original blueprints. MGM sold their own Robby used in the film in 1971 to Movie World in Buena Park, California, where he is on display in his retirement. Top Left: Robby asks "Can I be of service, sir?" showing the effect of the lighted neon voice tubes. The ship's cook (Earl Holliman) looks about furtively before asking if Robby knows where he can find some of the "real stuff" on this planet. Robby acts the perfect straight man in the film, and firmly established the concept of humor between man and his robot, overdone in so many later films of the genre. 2nd: United Planets Cruiser C-57D comes in for a landing on Altair IV, a forty-four inch model filmed on a huge miniature set built outdoors on MGM's Lot 3. 3rd: The invisible Id monster penetrates the force field surrounding the ship, mistaken for a short circuit, and murders Chief Quinn, one of the animation effects supplied by Joshua Meador of Walt Disney Productions. Bottom Left: Altaira (Anne Francis) slips out of her swimsuit, a shot which illustrates the effectiveness of the cyclorama backings, painted by George Gibson's scenic department, in representing the surface of Altair IV on the soundstages and backlot of MGM.

article by Frederick S. Clarke and Steve Rubin


FORBIDDEN PLANET





FORBIDDEN PLANET A Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Release. 3/30/56. In Eastmancolor and CinemaScope. 98 minutes. Produced by Nicholas Nayfack. Directed by Fred McLeod Wilcox. Screenplay by Cyril Hume, based on a story by *Irving Block* and Allen Adler. Art directors, Cedric Gibbons and *Arthur Lonergan*. Set decorators, Edwin B. Willis and *Hugh Hunt*. Director of Photography, *George Folsey*. Color Consultant, Charles K. Hagedon. Hair styles by Sydney Guilaroff. Makeup by William Tuttle. Assistant director, *George Rhein*. Special Effects, *A. Arnold Gillespie*, Warren Newcombe, Irving G. Reis, and Joshua Meador through the courtesy of Walt Disney Productions. Electronic Tonalities by *Louis* and *Bebe Barron*. Edited by *Ferris Webster*. Recording supervisor, Dr. Wesley C. Miller. Anne Francis' costumes by *Helen Rose*. Men's costumes by *Walter Plunkett*.

Dr. Morbius	*Walter Pidgeon*
Altaira	Anne Francis
Commander Adams	Leslie Nielsen
Lt. "Doc" Ostrow	*Warren Stevens*
Lt. Farman	Jack Kelly
Chief Quinn	Richard Anderson
Cook	Earl Holliman
Bosun	*George Wallace*

Crewmen

Grey	Bob Dix
Youngerford	Jimmy Thompson
Strong	James Drury
Randall	Harry Harvey Jr.
Lindstrom	Roger McGee
Moran	Peter Miller
Nichols	Morgan Jones
Silvers	Richard Grant

and introducing Robby the Robot

I would like to thank those listed above in italics, and those who went uncredited on the film, including Dore Schary, Bob Kinoshita, Glen Robinson, Bob MacDonald, Jack McMasters, Dwight Carlisle, Joe Alves, Art Cruickshank, Harry Tepker, Joseph J. Cohn, and Jim McClennan, for their cooperation in being interviewed after so many years. I would especially like to thank art director Arthur Lonergan for his continuing cooperation in providing a valuable overview of the production, and his help in locating former co-workers, and providing many of the photos and drawings which document the film's creative genesis. Special thanks also to Mentor Huebner, Matthew Yuricich, Jack Gaylord, George Gibson, and Louis and Bebe Barron, for taking the time to dig out, after more than twenty-three years, artwork and photographs which were invaluable in documenting the production. Thanks to Richard Maibaum and Mrs. Dorothy Hume for information about screenwriter Cyril Hume, Phil Meador for details of his father's special effects work at Walt Disney, and Herman Hoffman for information and photos on THE INVISIBLE BOY. Thanks also to Jordan R. Fox for preliminary interviewing, to Deidre Jarel for interview leads, to Barclay Shaw for retouching artwork and photos, and to Mark Frank, Dan Scapperotti, Vincent DiFate, Don Shay, Wes Shank, Kathy Bushman, Jeff Sillifant and Stephen C. Wathen for the loan of photos. And finally, a special debt of gratitude to Bill Malone, world's foremost authority on FORBIDDEN PLANET, for the use of his rare collection of memorabilia and for my continued reliance on his valuable knowledge and advice. *FSC*

FORBIDDEN PLANET, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer's first attempt at science fiction released in 1956, was a film years ahead of its time, the direct forerunner of STAR TREK, STAR WARS and the big-budget science fiction films of today. It was the first film to be set in a future where mankind is spreading out into the universe in faster-than-light starships. The theme had been a central one in the literature of the genre for more than twenty years but had been ignored by a Hollywood still grappling with what it thought were the advanced concepts of travelling to the moon or Mars. And while movie-makers had invested large sums to bring science fiction novels legitimized as "classics" to the screen, like H. G. Wells' THINGS TO COME (1936) and Jules Verne's 20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA (1954), FORBIDDEN PLANET was the first film ever to invest a large budget in an original science fiction property tailored for the screen. Had the film been a commercial success, it could have freed the science fiction film genre from its entrapment in cheap budgets and prosaic earth-bound plots, a prolonged childhood from which it is only now just emerging.

The film was conceived by Irving Block and Allen Adler in the spring of 1954. Block, a painter by profession, was one of the first in Hollywood to recognize science fiction as a new form of screen entertainment. He and his partner Jack Rabin had filmed the special effects for ROCKETSHIP XM in 1950, the film along with George Pal's DESTINATION MOON which had started the boom in science fiction films that year. Between 1950 and 1955, Block and Rabin provided special effects for a series of ill-conceived, low-budget films that exploited rather than explored the new genre. During a lull in the partnership, Block was approached by Adler who suggested they pool their talents to come up with a screen treatment more advanced and sophisticated than the crude brand of science fiction then being filmed. Although Block was primarily a special effects technician (the eye creature of ATOMIC SUBMARINE is actually Block's arm!), he had done some writing and was particularly fond of mythology and the classics. Adler, a member of the Adler acting family (Luther Adler was his uncle), had sold some stories to television, and came up with the basic science fiction concepts to be used in the treatment, ones that hadn't yet been tried on the screen. Block suggested they use Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, Block's favorite play, as the basis for their story's action and characters.

In *The Tempest*, Prospero is a magician who lives on an enchanted island with his beautiful daughter Miranda, who has never seen men. The enchanted island became the planet Altair IV, thousands of light years from Earth. Prospero the magician became Morbius the philologist, and Miranda became Altaira, his daughter. Block snatched the name Morbius from his background in Geodesy (Block was a map-maker during World War II). Moebius was the German mathematician who discovered the topological conundrum, the Moebius Strip, a two-dimensional figure with only one surface. The group of Italian nobles who visit the island in Shakespeare's play became the officers and crew of the United Planets Cruiser C-57D. The hunchbacked witch-child Caliban, a virtual slave to Prospero's will, became the Id monster, the servitor of Morbius' subconscious mind. And to create the unforgettable character of Robby the Robot, Block's inspiration was Ariel, the spirit in the play which is a master at creating illusions and spells. Robby grew greatly in importance and gradually became the star of FORBIDDEN PLANET.

For the Id monster, Block also dipped into Freudian psychology, then in vogue with the general public. "The idea of a bug-eyed monster is a pretty childish illusion," says Block, explaining the choice. "But there are real monsters and demons that exist within us that we know nothing about. We're capable of doing the most horrendous things and we're often shocked at this truism." For other facets of FORBIDDEN PLANET, the two writers borrowed freely from numerous myths and legends, source material often used by Shakespeare himself. The chaste and pure Altaira enjoys an Edenic rapport with the transplanted Earth creatures who roam the lush, forrested grounds of the home of her father, yet when she kisses Commander Adams for the first time, a change transpires in her relationship with the beasts and her pet tiger nearly kills her. Block's inspiration for this sequence came from the myth which states that only a pure virgin can tame a unicorn. To Block, the myths consulted by the two writers as source material not only enriched the texture of the story, they dem-

Top Right: Special effects technician Andy Thatcher wheels Robby's upper torso across the Central Core Area of the Morbius Home set. This angle looks out onto the Fore Court entrance and shows a portion of the 20'x30' cyclorama backing. Bottom Right: A reverse angle from above as seen in the film, showing Robby's jeep arriving with Adams, Ostrow and Farman. Morbius stands waiting, somewhat ominously, at the Fore Court entrance. Left: Irving Block circa 1957, the co-author of the original story on which the film is based, and his early concept of the Id monster, drawn even before the property was sold to MGM for filming. Block is now a professor of art at California State College at Northridge.

onstrated that there is always something fundamental in mythology—even in the far-off future of Altair IV.

The two writers had figured to sell their finished story, entitled FATAL PLANET, to Allied Artists, a move which seemed quite logical to them since that studio was encouraging a great many science fiction projects at the time, including TARGET EARTH, INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS and WORLD WITHOUT END. Their agent disagreed with them. He encouraged them to "think big" and submit the story to MGM first. They agreed it was worth a try and that, after all, there was always Allied Artists to turn to if they were turned down. Thus, FATAL PLANET was spared the fate of becoming yet another low-budget science fiction film.

On a crisp, spring morning in 1954, Block and Adler walked into the plush office of producer Nicholas Nayfack at MGM in Culver City. Nayfack, a nephew of Nicholas Schenck, the founder of Loew's Inc., the parent company of MGM, had been in the movie business since 1934, but had not become a creative producer until he returned from the U. S. Navy after World War II. When Block offered him the story to read, Nayfack refused.

"You tell me what the story is about," he said professionally.

So, using his keen imagination, Block began to act out the story of FATAL PLANET. In a quiet raspy voice, he began to move around the room and whisper.

"You know, Mr. Nayfack, we have an invisible monster. . ." Before he could complete the sentence, Nayfack interrupted.

"How can you see an invisible monster?" he asked.

"You can't. That's the point. It's very scary. When you see something it's not half as frightening as your imagination," said Block, hoping the executive would agree.

"But how will you know it's there ?" persisted Nayfack.

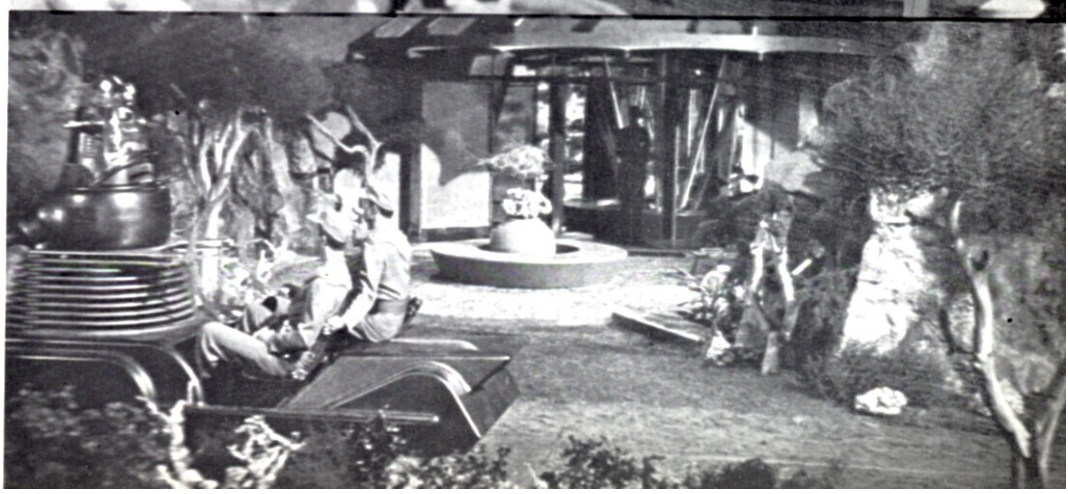
And then Block began to act out the monster, lurking around the room, at the same time, taking breaths in heavy gasps. For a moment he would hesitate and then he would move forward again.

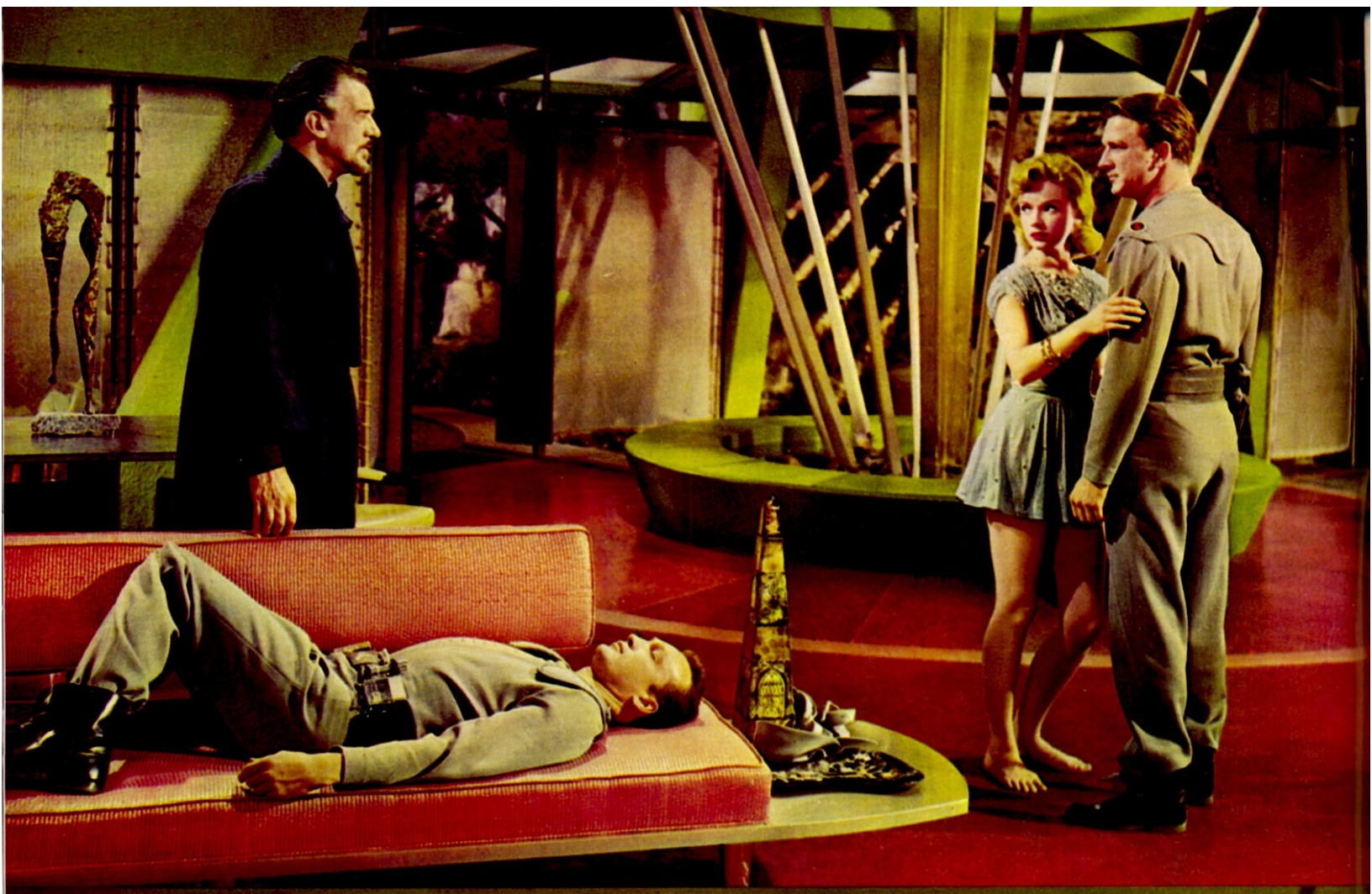
"That's great!" exclaimed Nayfack, getting in the mood and realizing the possibilities.

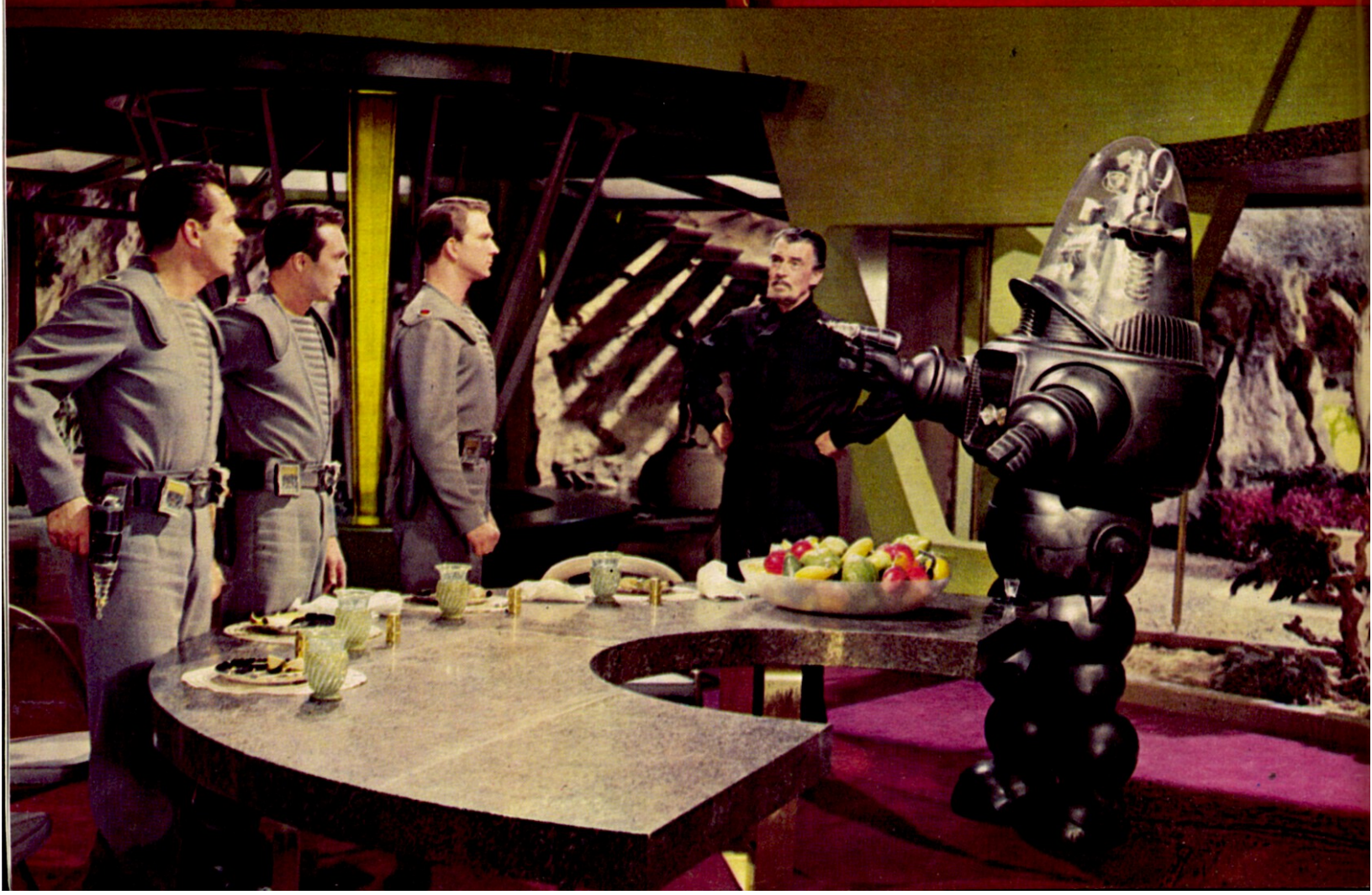
"The great thing about this," furthered Block, hoping to put the capper on the deal, "is that it won't cost you a cent to make the monsters. You could have a thousand of them!"

That bit of logic was quickly grasped by the producer, and Nayfack told them it was a deal. Now all Nayfack had to do was sell the idea to studio chief Dore Schary. Although Nayfack was firmly convinced that the project was workable, he was also









Right: Art director Arthur Lonergan and his preliminary design for the layout of the Morbius home set. Lonergan first broke down the script into the various interior and exterior sets required, sketching in the general appearance of each and making note of the special props, effects, and process photography required. Such sketches are the first step in transferring a writer's concepts into film images. Not done for their aesthetic appearance, the sketches are utilitarian, serving as the blueprint for the entire production. Top Left: Doc Ostrow (Warren Stevens) lies dead after taking the "brain boost" to learn the secret of Altair IV's planetary force. "The fool, the meddling idiot," raves Morbius (Walter Pidgeon), "as though his ape's brain could contain the secrets of the Krell. Let him be buried with the other victims of human greed and folly." Altaira (Anne Francis) sees the dark side of her father for the first time, and agrees to leave with Commander Adams (Leslie Nielsen). Bottom Left: After ordering Robby to disintegrate a garden plant, Morbius orders him to shoot Commander Adams ("Aim right between the eyes.") to demonstrate the robot's inability to harm humans. Lt. Farman (Jack Kelly) and Doc Ostrow reach for their blasters in surprise. These scenes prominently feature the Central Core Area in the background, the hub around which Lonergan designed his set of the Int. & Ext. Morbius Home. To the left of the Central Core is the entrance from the Fore Court and jeep road. To the right of the Central Core is the terrace and outdoor pool. The steps behind the central core lead to second floor sleeping quarters, never shown.

aware of the fact that Dore Schary had personally rejected scores of science fiction projects in his five years as head of studio production.

What was once thought to be a general reluctance on the part of MGM to enter the 1950's science fiction craze was instead merely a rejection by the studio of the cheap and unimaginative. If Schary liked something, and the price was right, it didn't even matter what the New York executives thought. His contract gave him creative autonomy to choose new projects. Fortunately for Nayfack, Schary found the FATAL PLANET story worthwhile.

Says Schary today, "I liked the idea of the Id force and its effect on Morbius. It was an imaginative concept and I felt it was the type of idea that could transcend the average space adventure story—the type of picture that was then being mass produced by everyone else. Up until that time, I had seen virtually nothing even close to what we thought could be the studio's first science fiction entry. There was no total anti-science fiction sentiment among the executives. That would have been stupid. We were simply waiting for the right project."

The property underwent a title change to FORBIDDEN PLANET (the word "Fatal" was thought to be too negative) and Cyril Hume was hired to write the screenplay. Hume was between assignments. He'd just finished an Emmy-winning television drama, FATEFUL DECISION, the story of a kidnapping. Hume had developed some expertise in writing for exotic settings while working on scripts for Tarzan films. He would later pen the screenplay for THE INVISIBLE BOY, Nayfack's only other science fiction project. Hume died in 1963, and aside from a list of his credits provided by the Screenwriter's Guild, there is not much written information about him. Screenwriter Richard Maibaum, who wrote eight of the ten James Bond films, was a long-time friend and associate of Hume. In 1954, Hume and Maibaum collaborated on a treatment entitled *B. E. M.* The abbreviation stood for "Bug-Eyed Monster." The story told of a science fiction magazine editor who attempts to increase his sales by advertising the fact that he has been approached by aliens from space. He soon starts a campaign to prepare Earth for their arrival. One day, the editor is actually approached by a real alien who taps him on the shoulder and offers his thanks with a simple, "good work!"

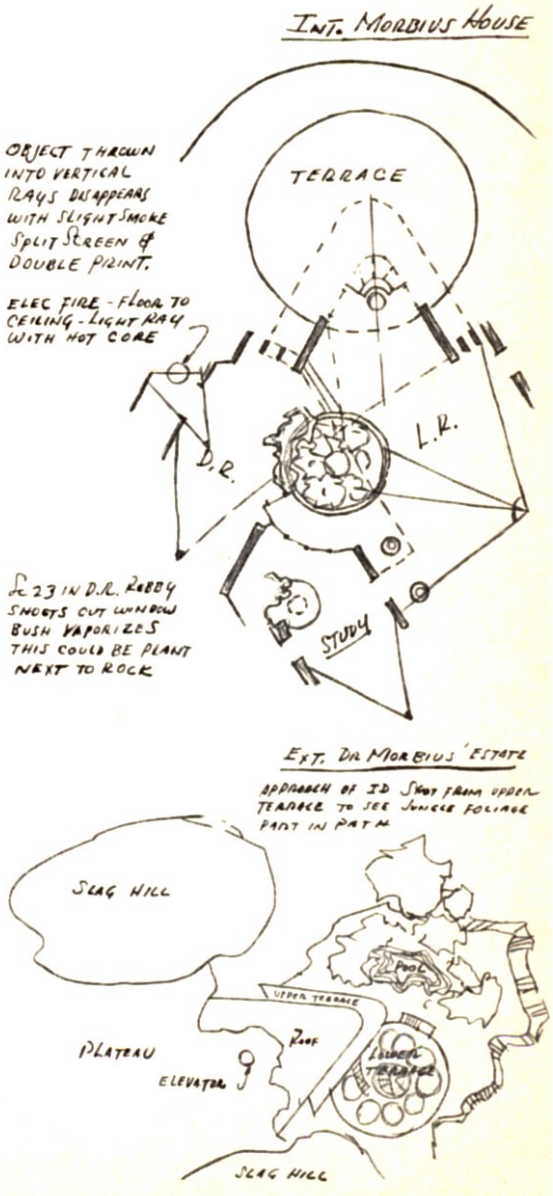
When Maibaum and Hume failed to sell the idea, they began working on a new project. MGM had taken an option on *First Contact*, a short story by Murray Leinster about the first communication between man and extraterrestrials. Maibaum and Hume renamed the Leinster short story FIRST ENCOUNTER, and concentrated on the frustrating language problems that occur between Earth and the aliens. The final breakthrough comes when Earth scientists begin broadcasting mathematical equations with which the aliens are familiar. The concept is quite similar to the form of communication that occurs in CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND, where a musical tone provides the key to communicating with an alien race. FIRST ENCOUNTER proved to be one of the many script ideas rejected by MGM chief Dore Schary. He found the project too complicated. It was obvious to Hume and Maibaum that Schary wanted the aliens to speak colloquial English. Having failed to sell the idea to MGM, they took the script over to Robert Bassman, a Columbia executive who was deeply interested in getting his studio into the science fiction derby. But he also found the FIRST ENCOUNTER script a bit dry. Conceptually, like FORBIDDEN PLANET, it was simply ahead of its time.

Nayfack hired Irving Block to visualize FATAL PLANET while Hume worked it into screenplay form. Block, a man of many talents but primarily an artist, had submitted some preliminary sketches with his story treatment. "At this point," said Block, "no one quite knew precisely what the picture was supposed to look like. They gave me a little room someplace in a corner of the studio and said, 'Go ahead man, do it the way you see it.' And to some degree they followed what I did very carefully." Nayfack offered to make Block an "associate producer" on the film, but Block declined the offer because it was not extended as well to his writing partner, Allen Adler. Block did accept the assignment to illustrate his story, without credit, for a weekly salary, and began work on a series of preproduction paintings in an isolated office in a building at the front of the MGM lot. Periodically, he attended story conferences conducted by Nayfack at which screenwriter Cyril Hume and unit art director Arthur Lonergan were present.* Block discussed the visual look of the picture with Hume and Nayfack during the

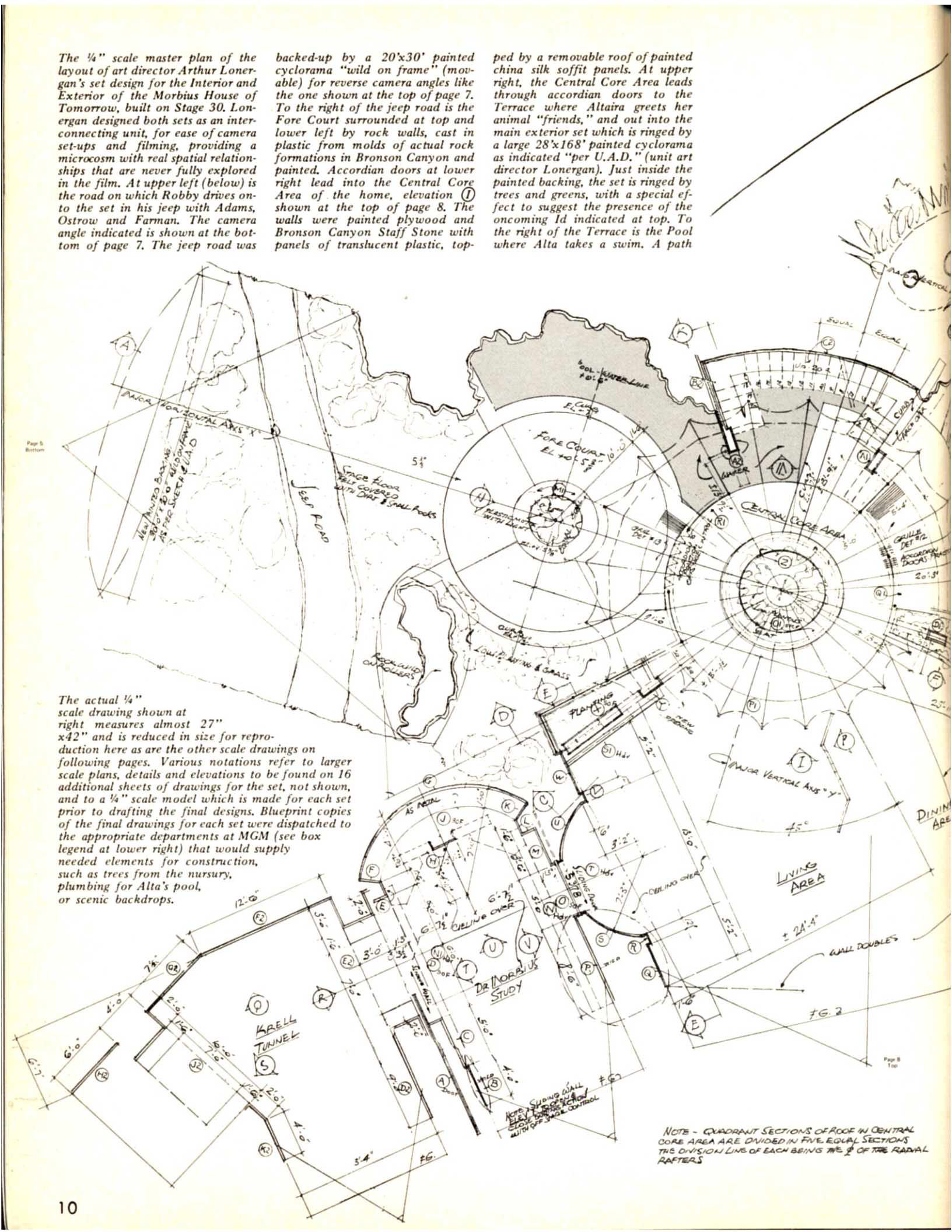
continued on page 12

*Arthur Lonergan knows Irving Block, remembering that everyone at MGM referred to him affectionately as "Blocky," but insists that he was not present at these story conferences, and suggests that department head Cedric Gibbons may have been present. Block discounts that idea, saying, "Gibbons was a kind of Pooh Bah in his holy sanctuary," implying that such a story conference was beneath the dignity of the art department head. Besides, Block specifically remembers Lonergan being there.





The ¼" scale master plan of the layout of art director Arthur Lonergan's set design for the Interior and Exterior of the Morbius House of Tomorrow, built on Stage 30. Lonergan designed both sets as an interconnecting unit, for ease of camera set-ups and filming, providing a microcosm with real spatial relationships that are never fully explored in the film. At upper left (below) is the road on which Robby drives onto the set in his jeep with Adams, Ostrow and Farman. The camera angle indicated is shown at the bottom of page 7. The jeep road was backed-up by a 20'x30' painted cyclorama "wild on frame" (movable) for reverse camera angles like the one shown at the top of page 7. To the right of the jeep road is the Fore Court surrounded at top and lower left by rock walls, cast in plastic from molds of actual rock formations in Bronson Canyon and painted. Accordian doors at lower right lead into the Central Core Area of the home, elevation (I) shown at the top of page 8. The walls were painted plywood and Bronson Canyon Staff Stone with panels of translucent plastic, topped by a removable roof of painted china silk soffit panels. At upper right, the Central Core Area leads through accordian doors to the Terrace where Altaira greets her animal "friends," and out into the main exterior set which is ringed by a large 28'x168' painted cyclorama as indicated "per U.A.D." (unit art director Lonergan). Just inside the painted backing, the set is ringed by trees and greens, with a special effect to suggest the presence of the oncoming Id indicated at top. To the right of the Terrace is the Pool where Alta takes a swim. A path



The actual ¼" scale drawing shown at right measures almost 27" x42" and is reduced in size for reproduction here as are the other scale drawings on following pages. Various notations refer to larger scale plans, details and elevations to be found on 16 additional sheets of drawings for the set, not shown, and to a ¼" scale model which is made for each set prior to drafting the final designs. Blueprint copies of the final drawings for each set were dispatched to the appropriate departments at MGM (see box legend at lower right) that would supply needed elements for construction, such as trees from the nursury, plumbing for Alta's pool, or scenic backdrops.

NOTE - QUADRANT SECTIONS OF ROOF IN CENTRAL CORE AREA ARE DIVIDED IN FIVE EQUAL SECTIONS THE DIVISION LINE OF EACH BEING THE ½ OF THE RADIAL RAFTERS

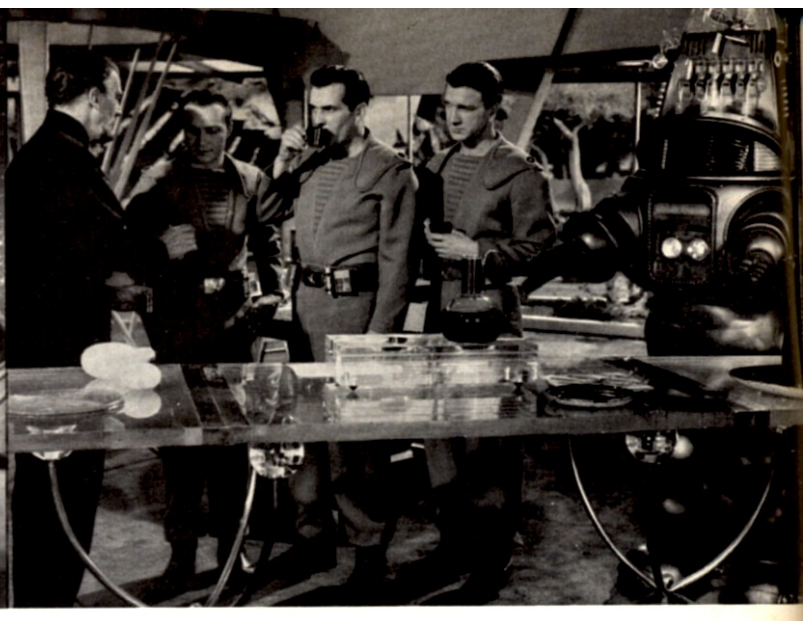
Int. & Ext. Plans Dr. Morbius House



SHEET 1 OF 17 SHEETS		
M. G. M. ART DEPARTMENT		
DIRECTOR WILCOX	MODEL	3
PROD. NO 1671 SET NO 03	CONST.	6
PICT. TITLE FORBIDDEN PLANET	STOCK	2
SET TITLE INT & EXT DR MORBIUS HOUSE	PAINT	1
	STAFF	2nd
	MACH.	1
REMODELED FROM	PLUMBING	1
DRAWN BY STURGE DATE 2-1-55	ELECT.	1
SCALE 1/4" = 1'-0"	SET DRESS	1
WORK DATE 2-14-55 2-16-55	DRAPES	1
CHECKED BY	NURSERY	1
UNIT ART DIR LONERGAN	PROCESS	1
167103	SEWING	1
	SCENIC	1
	STAFF MOD.	1
	FLOWERS	1
	SIGNS	1
	EL. FIXT.	1
	NEWCOMBE	1

leading from the Terrace at lower right rings the pool and leads to a grove of trees and the rock ledge from which the tiger jumps at Alta and Adams. The three camera angles suggested to cover the set in this area are shown on page 13. The interior house set is shown lower left, just below the Central Core Area which opens up into the Living Area and Dining Area of the house, as shown on page 8. The Central Core Area is ringed by the steel shutters which Morbius can call into place to seal-off the house from the outside. A transparant screen partition indicated by elevation (P) separates the Living and Dining Areas. At left the Living Area leads into Dr. Morbius' Study through a sliding door. The curved upper wall of the study was a 11'x14' star field transparancy, taken by the 200" Mt. Palomar telescope, lit from behind. At left the Study leads into a Krell Tunnel through a sliding wall, see elevation (T) shown on page 12, designed to match the Krell tunnel and lab set built on stage 21.





story conferences, bringing his sketchbook for discussion and further development and sketching new ideas and concepts as they arose. "I didn't have anything to do with the designing of Morbius' house," says Block. "I had some different opinions on what that should look like, but the producer wanted it to look that way, and that's what he got. The principal design work I did had to do with the science fiction side of it, like the interior of the ship, the Krell laboratories, and the tunnels. I made preliminary designs of the matte shots to represent the Krell furnace and ventilator shafts purely from imagination."

Hume's script describes one of Block's earliest concepts for this sequence, when Morbius gives Adams and Ostrow a tour of the Krell wonders. A shuttle car was not part of the concept at this point. Instead, Morbius leads the officers through an archway in the Krell laboratory into what the script describes as the "next room:"

LONG SHOT–(PROCESS)–NEXT ROOM

The CAMERA is LOOKING down a softly-lighted corridor which runs directly off to the vanishing point. It is packed with metal electronic units on both sides, so that the effect is something like seeing a modern automatic telephone exchange in opposed mirrors. The three men ENTER FROM BEHIND CAMERA. When they speak even very quietly, every word echoes uncannily.

MORBIUS
(pointing down corridor)
Twenty miles!
(turning, pointing again at right angles)
Twenty miles!

PAN through 90 degrees to a second vista, identical to the first. As they stare at each other in silence, they begin to hear faint mechanical clicks on all sides.

ADAMS
(a whisper)
Listen!–circuits opening and closing.

MORBIUS
They never rest.

He leads them out upon a sort of flying bridge, which is cantilevered out over a large open shaft. Now their hair and clothing is stirred by a steady up-draft.

MORBIUS
One of the ventilator shafts. You can feel the warm air rising. Look down.
(as they draw back)
Look down, gentlemen! Are you afraid?

Against every instinct in their bodies, they grip the hand-rail, and look down. Sweat comes out on their faces.

HIGH ANGLE VERTICAL LONG SHOT–DOWN THE VENTILATOR SHAFT

Just at the vanishing point, there is a faintly pulsing pin-point of violet blue light.

MORBIUS VOICE (O.S.)
7800 levels–twenty miles straight down!

MED. SHOT–THE THREE MEN

as they shrink back, sick and dazed.

DOC
That little dot of blue light way down there at the bottom–what's that?

Morbius switches on a small TV set.

MORBIUS
The batteries of the thermo-nuclear reactors–the leashed power of an exploding planetary system!

As TV screen is activated, TRUCK IN slightly: A FULL SHOT (MINIATURE PROCESS)–MULTIPLE BANKS OF ATOMIC FURNACE in Egyptian perspective, glowing balefully blue.

MORBIUS
(watching the officers)
A single machine, a cube twenty miles on each side! For two-thousand centuries it has waited patiently here, turning and lubricating itself, replacing worn parts. I have reason to believe that six years ago it performed a minor alteration throughout the entire 8000 cubic miles of its own fabric.

ADAMS
(after a silence)
But–what's it for?

Morbius glances at him, and looks away.

MORBIUS
(oddly evasive)
Sometimes the gauges register a little when the buck deer fight in the autumn, or when the birds pass over in spring. And nearly a whole line became active when your ship first approached from space.

ADAMS
I asked you–*what's it for!?*

Morbius stands gripping the railing, staring down into the abyss.

MORBIUS
(haggard and haunted)
I don't know! In twenty years I have been able to form absolutely no conception at all.

Hume's dialogue was used almost as written, but the visual concept for the sequence was totally reworked in design paintings by Block, and then later in concept sketches by Arthur Lonergan (see page 58). Block had previously worked for Warren Newcombe's matte shot department, and it was for this experience that Nayfack hired him to help devise the special effects needed to visualize his own story concepts.

"There was a question as to what Morbius' house should look like," remembered Block about one of the story conferences. "I saw the house in a landscape that was essentially barren, because at the time I did not know what sort of sets they'd be able to build and I thought if they wanted to shoot location they would probably go with some kind of god-forsaken desert area. Hume, and I think Arthur [Lonergan] too, wanted a house like a Frank Lloyd Wright modern, with all kinds of landscaping. I said, 'I don't see it that way. I don't see it so lush.' I was thinking more of the desert, because you have to account for plants and all the rest. Nayfack took over and said, 'Alright fellas, alright! No arguments. What we'll do, we'll have a little bit of desert and a little bit of lush.'" Nayfack wanted a swimming pool in any case, adds Block, "so he could show some skin," when Altaira went swimming.

"Nayfack was a seasoned Hollywood producer with a sense of humor," says Block, to explain why Cyril Hume's script was sprinkled with its lighter moments. Nayfack insisted on comic characters like the Cook (played by Earl Holliman) and wanted gags in his byplay with Robby and the ship's crew. Hume's original script calls the Cook, always "identified by a white chef's cap, distinctly of a lower type than the others." In an early scene that was dropped from the script, Adams asks Doc Ostrow how the crew has fared during the long voyage. "Above average," replies Ostrow. "A few cases of space-blues–a little epidemic of claustro during the seventh month. But nobody's had to have shock therapy except the Cook." Quips Adams, "Yes, I could taste it in the chow." The Cook's scenes with Robby are even more outrageous in the original script. After being granted sixty gallons of genuine Rocket bourbon by the robot, in the script the scene continues. The Cook "stands contemplating an idea which seems too beautiful to be possible."

ROBBY
Sir?

COOK
(hoarse with hope)
Well, the fact is, I–I was just sort of wonderin' if

Right: Three views of the exterior of the Morbius house set: the swimming pool (top), the forrested grove (middle), showing the terrace at left, and pool in the background, and the rock to the right of the forrested grove (bottom), from which Alta and Adams are attacked by her pet tiger. The caged ramp for the tiger is visible at right. These shots show the effectiveness of the 28'x168' cyclorama backing painted by George Gibson's scenic department, which ringed the exterior portion of the house set. The curved wooden frame of the backing is visible at the top of the middle and bottom photos. Far Left: Morbius emerges from a Krell tunnel behind a sliding wall to surprise Ostrow and Adams in the act of snooping, as they examine some of the Krell writing he is deciphering. Near Left: Morbius serves coffee, brewed by Robby, to Ostrow, Farman and Adams. Note the electrical cable running to the heel of Robby's leg, attached to a remote control unit (not shown) which powered and activated the robot's mechanisms. Set decorator Hugh Hunt, who worked under department head Edwin B. Willis, remembers that budget cuts on the film didn't allow for the construction of all new furnishings for the sets. Just prior to shooting Hunt realized he had neglected to find a table for the Morbius dining room. Hunt rushed over to the lavish, modern-style home of art department chief Cedric Gibbons and snatched the glasstop table shown, which he remembered seeing there, just in the nick of time.







you could maybe see your way clear to puttin' me next to—to, well, a little female companionship.

(anxiously)
Y'understand what a female is, don't you?

ROBBY
Perfectly, sir.

(looking him over)
How many will you be needing?

COOK
(scandalized)
Now wait a minute, mister! I'm just a plain guy, and one at a time is plenty!

ROBBY
(reflecting)
Would tomorrow do?

COOK
(excitedly pointing o. s.)
Yeah! Right over in behind them bushes.
(showing wristwatch)
At 1700 on the nose.

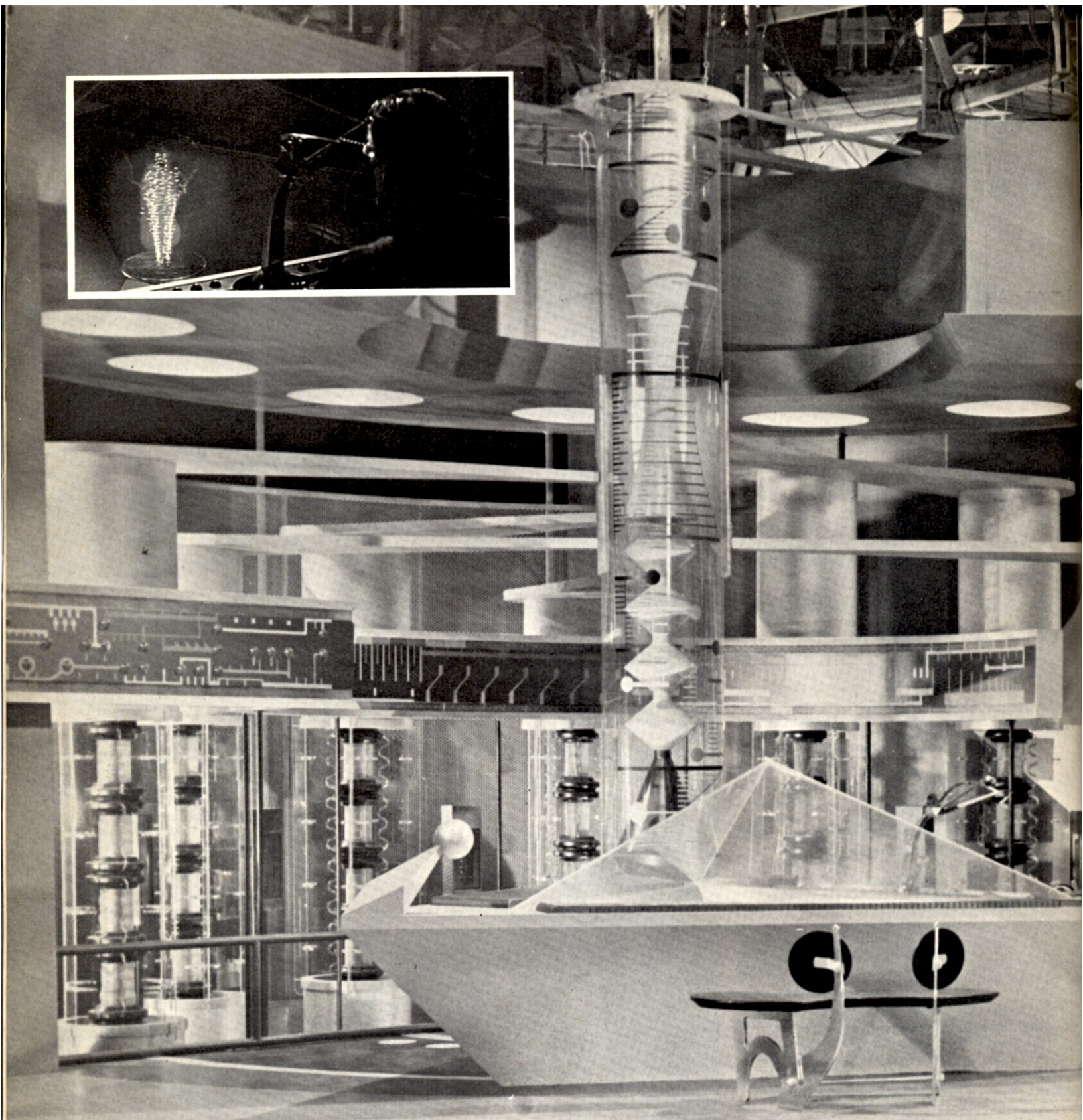
ROBBY
On the nose, sir. Thank you, sir.

COOK
(tears in his eyes)
Mister, I've been from here to there in this galaxy and I want to say that you're the most understandin' soul I ever met up with!

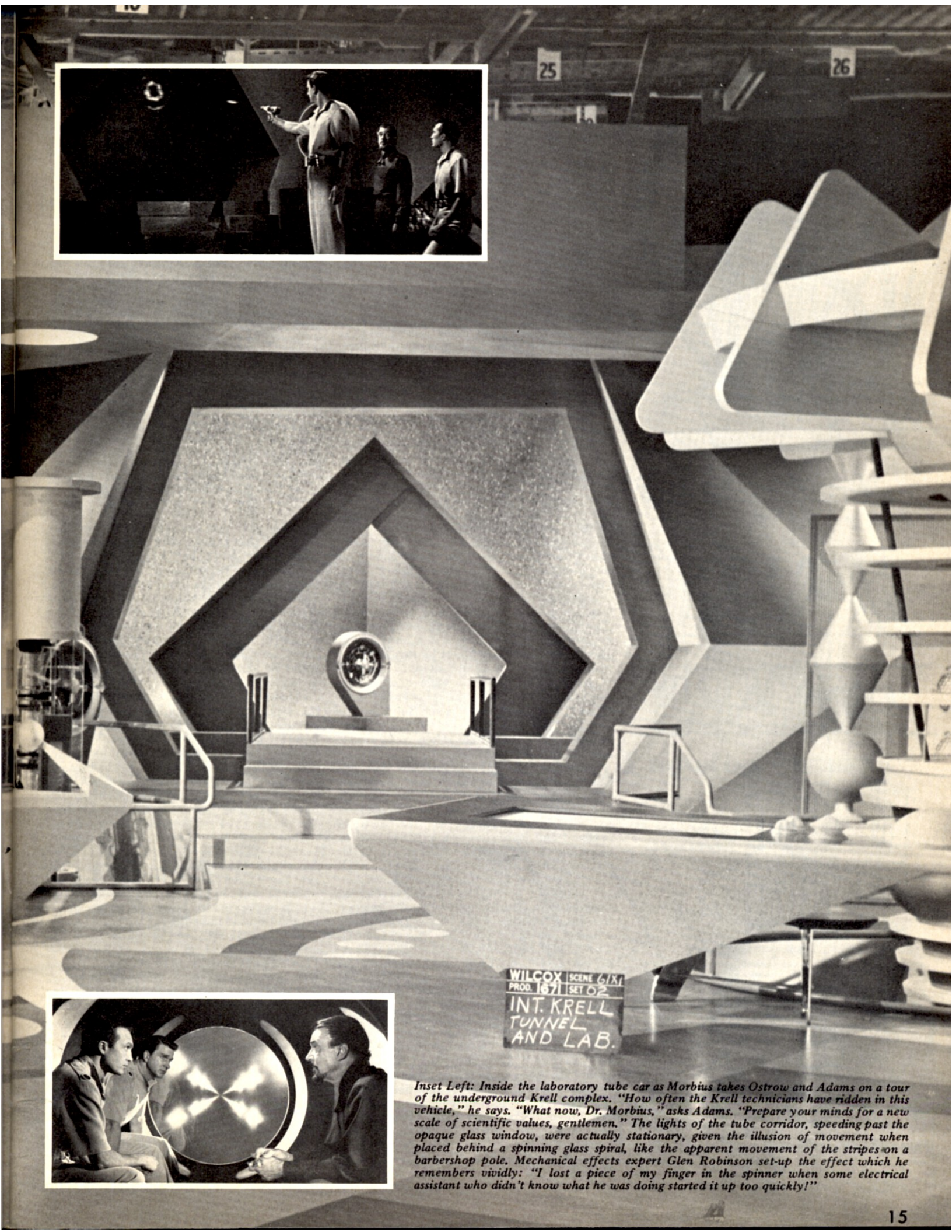
The following day Robby presents the Cook with his booze and a female *chimp! "Me and her!?"* exclaims the Cook. "Why you dirty-minded de-vice! I ought to take a can-opener to you!" But the Cook gets over his disappointment and adopts the chimp as the ship's mascot, where it appears throughout the remainder of the original script in further comic interludes. Fortunately, this scene, the chimp, and a great deal of Nayfack's miscalculated humor was removed from the script when Fred McLeod Wilcox was called-in as director, and during final editing.

Hume's script closely followed the original story written by Block and Adler, and is substantially the same as what's seen in the final film. Hume's task as scripter was basically to write dialogue and flesh-out the plot with more fully-developed characters. There are some interesting differences

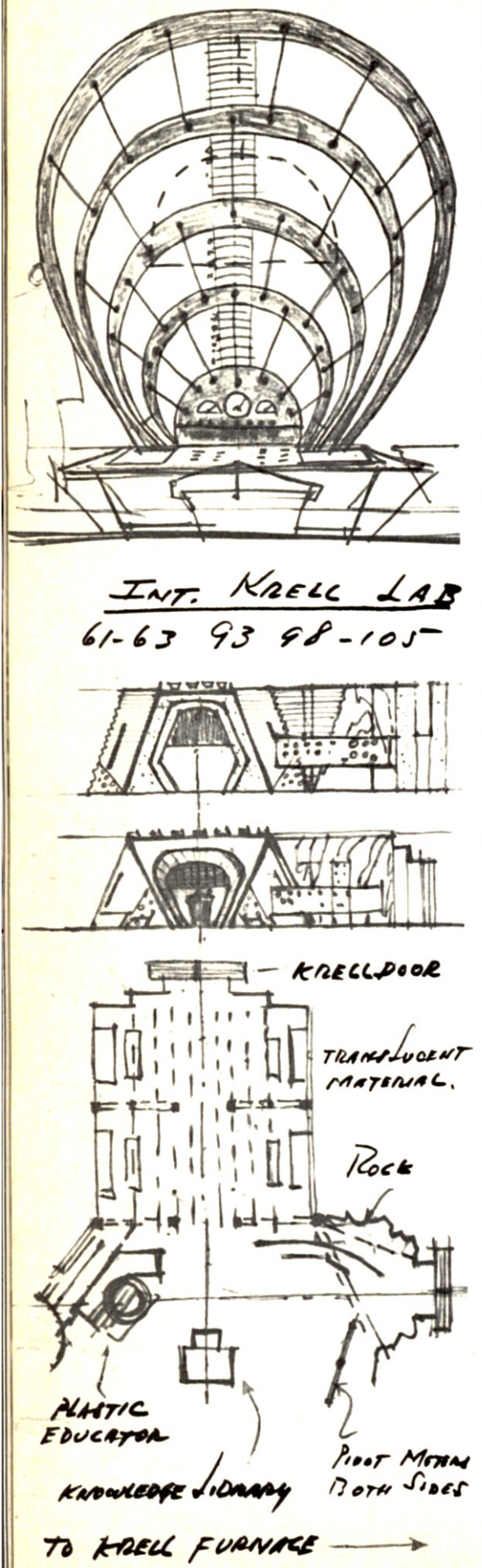
continued on page 16



Int. Krell laboratory, one of the four major sets designed for FORBIDDEN PLANET by art director Arthur Lonergan. This view represents elevation C as shown on the scale plans for the set printed on the following page. The plastic educator is shown at left foreground, a device used to train Krell children on which Morbius, and later Lt. Ostrow, have their intellectual capacities boosted to that of supergenius. Putting on the educator headset raises the indicator inside the vertical glass column, showing the level of intelligence. The laboratory entrance is seen middle right. The corridor leading up to the laboratory (inset top right) is part of the same set. Here Morbius asks Adams to test his blaster on the metal of the Krell door, which drinks up energy like a sponge. The visual educator is seen below and to the right of the entrance. On this device Morbius projects and studies the scientific knowledge of the Krell, a sheer bulk of knowledge surpassing many million earthly libraries. Morbius materializes the image of Altaira while demonstrating the plastic educator (inset top left). Effects technician Glen Robinson used the vibration of a big oscillator speaker to peak aluminum dust particles into a tiny cloud (not shown here) above the plate within the educator's lucite dome to begin the effect. He then superimposed a fast spinning (10,000 rpm) figurine and electrical arcs discharged from a big Van de Graaf generator he built with Max Gebinger. A cartoon outline of the figure as it materialized was supplied by Joshua Meador, and film of Anne Francis was matted in to complete the effect. Draftsman Bob Kinoshita designed the horizontal light display for the plastic educator to supplement the action of the rising vertical indicator. Light streaking across geometrical shapes inside the narrow rectangular box which rings the plastic educator was to create a weird pulsating effect. It worked fine in miniature, but fell flat on the full scale set. The effect depended upon a specific separation of the geometrical shapes to get a pulsating effect, and the separation wasn't correct in the construction. "What you see on the screen, as far as the horizontal effect, is only a bare outline of what we could have done," lamented Kinoshita. "It was very frustrating."



Inset Left: Inside the laboratory tube car as Morbius takes Ostrow and Adams on a tour of the underground Krell complex. "How often the Krell technicians have ridden in this vehicle," he says. "What now, Dr. Morbius," asks Adams. "Prepare your minds for a new scale of scientific values, gentlemen." The lights of the tube corridor, speeding past the opaque glass window, were actually stationary, given the illusion of movement when placed behind a spinning glass spiral, like the apparent movement of the stripes on a barbershop pole. Mechanical effects expert Glen Robinson set-up the effect which he remembers vividly: "I lost a piece of my finger in the spinner when some electrical assistant who didn't know what he was doing started it up too quickly!"



in a few of the dramatic scenes. In the script, when Adams visits Alta while she takes a dip in her swimming pool, he strips down to his tropical shorts and dives in to swim with her! Costumer Walter Plunkett actually designed tropical outfits for this scene, so as not to have the indecency of showing Adams removing his pants, but the scene was rewritten before shooting to keep him on dry land, possibly because the action was totally out of character. When Morbius and Alta visit the ship just after the burial of Chief Quinn, Hume's script included a dramatic scene with Adams in which Alta declares her love for him, and Morbius tells her she must choose between them. The scene is even referred to later in Alta's dialogue at the end of the film when she tells her father, "Morbius—you wanted me to make a choice—now you've chosen for me!" The scene was dropped by editor Ferris Webster, in making the film's first assembly, to pick up the pace. Webster's first assembly also omitted the final scene in Hume's script, which showed the wedding of Adams and Alta onboard ship, a corny touch at best (see page 43).

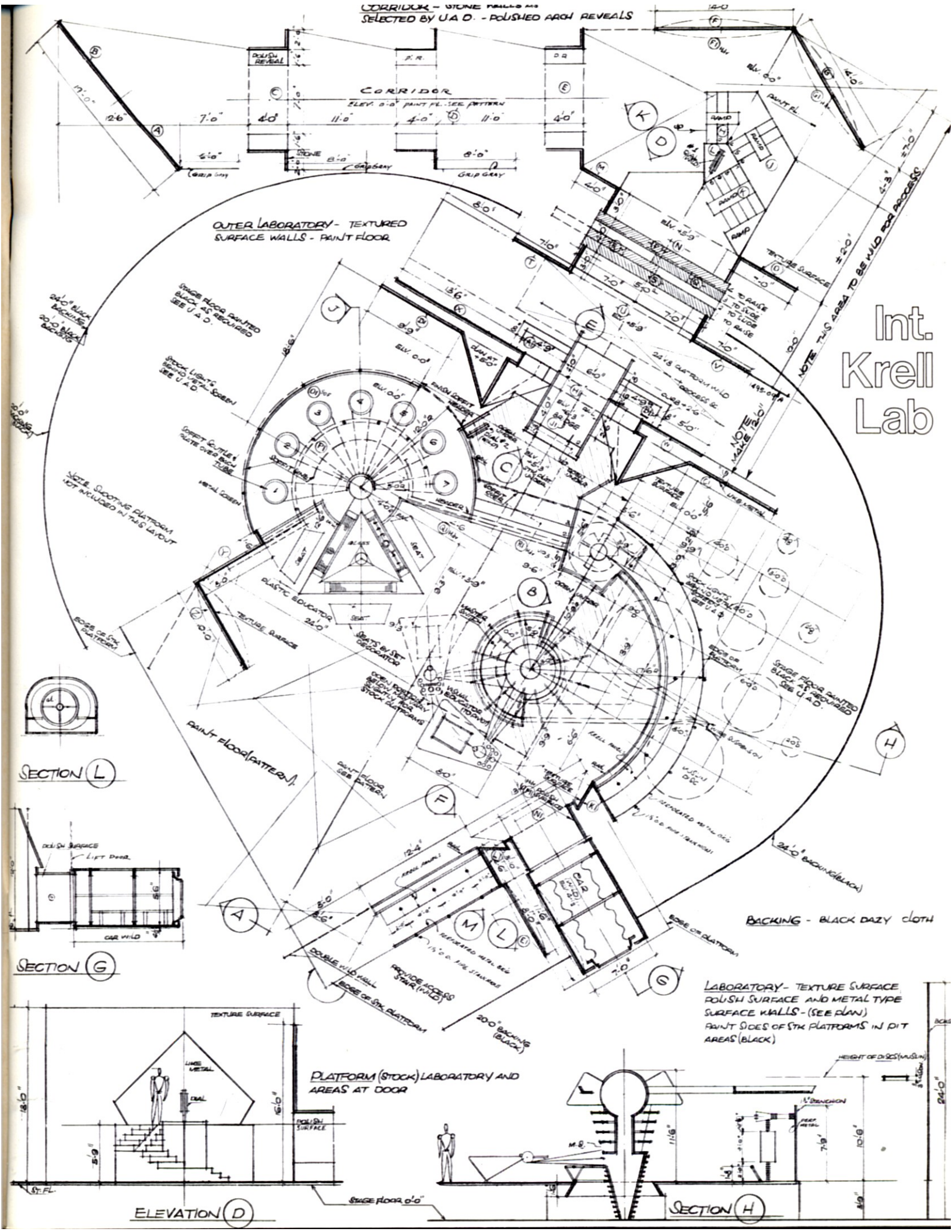
Nayfack submitted Hume's early draft screenplay and Irving Block's preproduction paintings to studio chief Dore Schary and got the final go-ahead to place FORBIDDEN PLANET on the studio's production calendar. The film was announced among MGM's production schedule for the remainder of 1954 and 1955 in early August. A preliminary budget was drawn up at this point by estimating how much the picture would cost to make, how long it would take to film, and how much revenue it was expected to produce in distribution, the latter figure supposedly determining the budget ceiling. Joseph J. Cohn, a production executive at MGM at this time remembered the general attitude toward FORBIDDEN PLANET. "We decided we wanted to keep the budget down," said Cohn. "We didn't have much faith in the picture." The preliminary budget was set low, the shooting schedule was to be short, and the cast inexpensive.

Although the motion picture industry was undergoing a boom in science fiction film production at this time, the pictures being made were low-cost and profitable for that reason. Some of the pictures planned and in production at other studios included: THE LAND UNKNOWN, THE INCREDIBLE SHRINKING MAN, THE CREATURE WALKS AMONG US, DEADLY MANTIS and THE MOLE PEOPLE at Universal, a studio which made science fiction a regular part of its production schedule, EARTH VS. THE FLYING SAUCERS, THE GAMMA PEOPLE, and CREATURE FROM GREEN HELL (possibly an unmade incarnation of THE MONSTER FROM GREEN HELL, produced by DCA three years later) at Columbia, WORLD WITHOUT END and INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS at Allied Artists, THE DAY THE WORLD ENDED and PHANTOM FROM 10,000 LEAGUES at American Releasing Corporation (the forerunner of AIP), and George Pal's CONQUEST OF SPACE at Paramount. All of the above were low-budget programmers and B-pictures, made for $500,000 and under. A B-picture at the time returned an average of $450,000 in distribution. Although MGM had a reputation for quality pictures, it produced low-budget programmers to fill out its annual distribution schedule like every other major studio in Hollywood. While FORBIDDEN PLANET was intended by MGM to be a cut above the quality of the science fiction films produced by its competitors, it was still to be classed as a low-budget picture at the studio. Production chief Dore Schary's first executive position at MGM put him in charge of their low-budget pictures in 1941. When he was promoted to head of all film production at the studio, it was to keep costs down. "I wanted to show there was no sense in our spending the kinds of money that had been spent in the years before I got there," said Schary. "We were making very top-flight pictures for a million four, million five." According to Schary, a prestige A-picture like EXECUTIVE SUITE, starring William Holden, Barbara Stanwyck, June Allyson and Frederic March, directed by Robert Wise, cost $1.4 million. Schary brought in low-budget films like THE NEXT VOICE YOU HEAR for about $480,000. The preliminary budget for FORBIDDEN PLANET was well under a million dollars, the dividing line which separated it from the first class A productions at the studio.

On August 20, 1954, Fred McLeod Wilcox was assigned to direct FORBIDDEN PLANET. Ironically, like Nayfack, Wilcox was also a relative of Nicholas Schenck, and had an equally difficult time getting into the creative end of filmmaking until introduced to Dore Schary, then head of MGM's B-picture division. Schary had confidence in Wilcox and gave him his first feature film assignment, LASSIE COME HOME. It may have been a sentimental story, but it did not lack for boxoffice and Wilcox was assured of his first success.

"It was a breaking-in period for Freddie," says Schary. "Like Nayfack, he had trouble living down the fact that he was a nephew of the Schenck's. LASSIE COME HOME was his first real chance to show what he could do. He was in good company

Right: Draftsman Marvin Connell's 1/4" scale plan for Int. Krell Laboratory set designed by art director Arthur Lonergan, the first among 22 sheets of plans, sections and elevations drawn-up in the art department to guide in the actual construction of the set. Letters on the plan inside directional circles, refer to sections and elevations on separate sheets, like the two shown at bottom. The corridor, steps leading up to the Krell door, and the door itself, shown at top of plan, were to be built "wild" (movable) in order to use a process rear screen to depict the door melting during the film's climax. The film's cinematographer, George Folsey, remembers the authenticity of the corridor passageways, cast in plastic from molds of real rock. "You could walk right up to the wall and it would look like the real thing, yet, two men would come over and pick up the very same wall and carry it away!" The steps leading up to the Krell door (top right on plan, bottom left elevations, see photo page 15) were designed to be separated by a smooth ramp in the middle. According to Folsey, "The Krell were originally frog-like in nature with two long legs and a big tail. They were never shown, but it was indicated in the original screenplay that the ramps between the steps were designed to accomodate their dragging tail." Section H (bottom right) shows the visual educator and rotating column which descended below the platformed laboratory floor into an area called "the pit." Full views of the set as built are shown on the preceding and following pages. Left: Arthur Lonergan's preproduction sketches for the Plastic Educator (top), the shape of the Krell door (middle) and the set layout.


CORRIDOR - STONE WALLS AS SELECTED BY U.A.D. - POLISHED ARCH REVEALS
CORRIDOR
OUTER LABORATORY - TEXTURED SURFACE WALLS - PAINT FLOOR
Int. Krell Lab
NOTE: THIS AREA TO BE WILD FOR PROCESS
NOTE: SHOOTING PLATFORM NOT INCLUDED IN THIS LAYOUT
PAINT FLOOR PATTERN
BACKING - BLACK DAZY CLOTH
LABORATORY - TEXTURE SURFACE POLISH SURFACE AND METAL TYPE SURFACE WALLS - (SEE PLAN) PAINT SIDES OF STK PLATFORMS IN PIT AREAS (BLACK)
PLATFORM (STOCK) LABORATORY AND AREAS AT DOOR
SECTION L
SECTION G
ELEVATION D
SECTION H

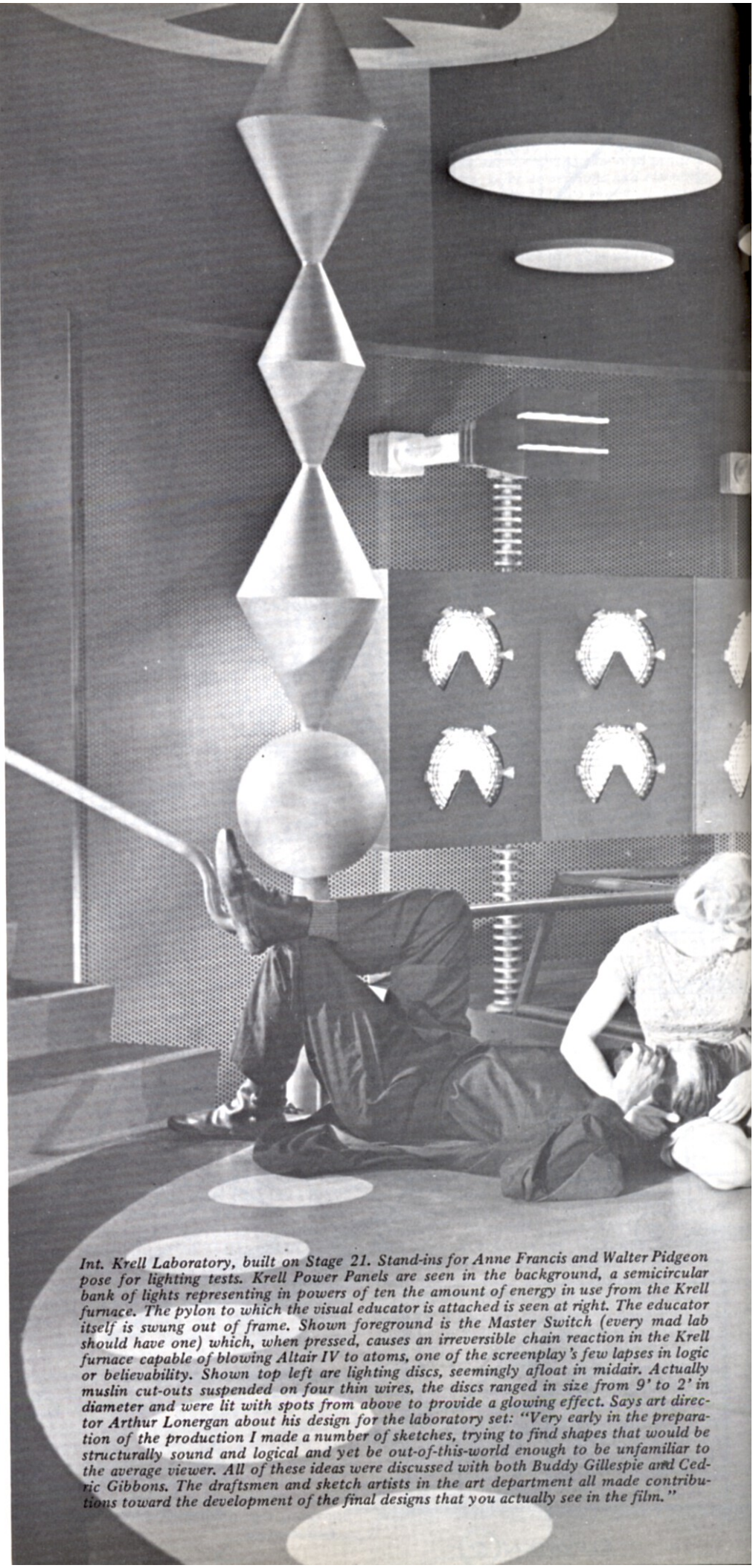
at that time. The B-picture division included a number of ambitious young directors who were just starting to make the change-over from shorts and wartime documentaries to feature films. Men like Robert Aldrich, David Miller, Fred Zinneman, Jules Dassin, Joseph Newman and George Sidney. They were all fighting for a chance to direct. And on these low-budget films, we gave them their chance.

"Later, Freddie ran into problems. Having always worked on the Lassies and some other offbeat films, he became hard to sell to the studio producers. And in those days you couldn't force a director on a producer. He had not done a romantic film either and this also diminished his chances of doing a major production. For some reason, a romantic film was always considered a certain status symbol for a director." The assignment of Wilcox as director was in keeping with the low-budget status of FORBIDDEN PLANET.

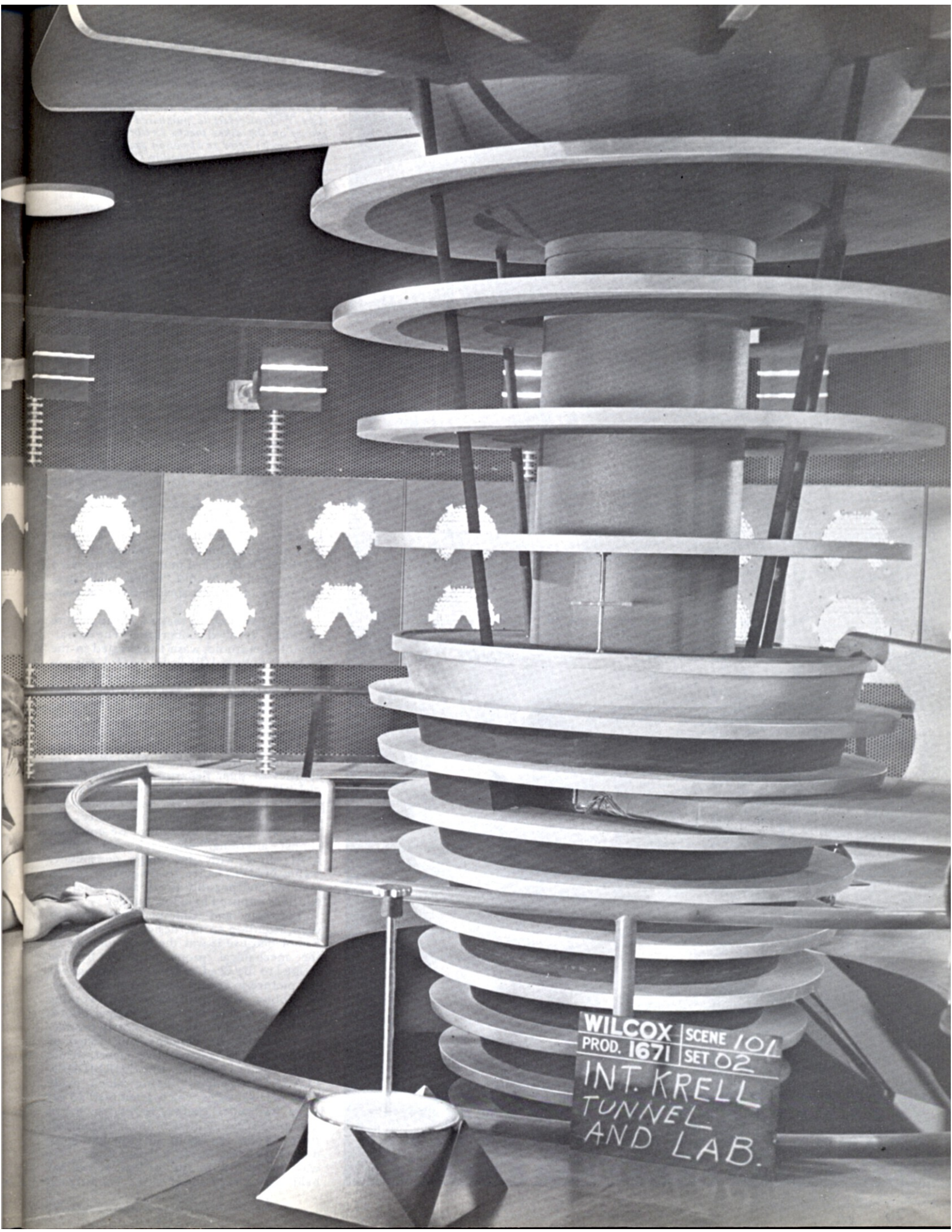
Cyril Hume finished his final draft screenplay on August 26, and spent the next nine days writing revisions called for by Nayfack and Wilcox. By September 3, the script of FORBIDDEN PLANET was complete, and Hume's work on the picture was at an end. While Nayfack worked on the preproduction of his next picture, THE SCARLET COAT, the story of Revolutionary War traitor Benedict Arnold, which would begin filming October 25, Wilcox, an astronomy buff, spent the next three months going over the script of FORBIDDEN PLANET with leading scientists at Harvard, Princeton, MIT, Caltech, and other centers of engineering and science. As shooting wrapped on THE SCARLET COAT, Nayfack began to devote his full energies to the preproduction of FORBIDDEN PLANET on December 9, 1954. Cedric Gibbons, head of the MGM art department, assigned unit art director Arthur Lonergan to the picture at this point. Lonergan had complete charge of designing FORBIDDEN PLANET, under Gibbons' overall supervision.

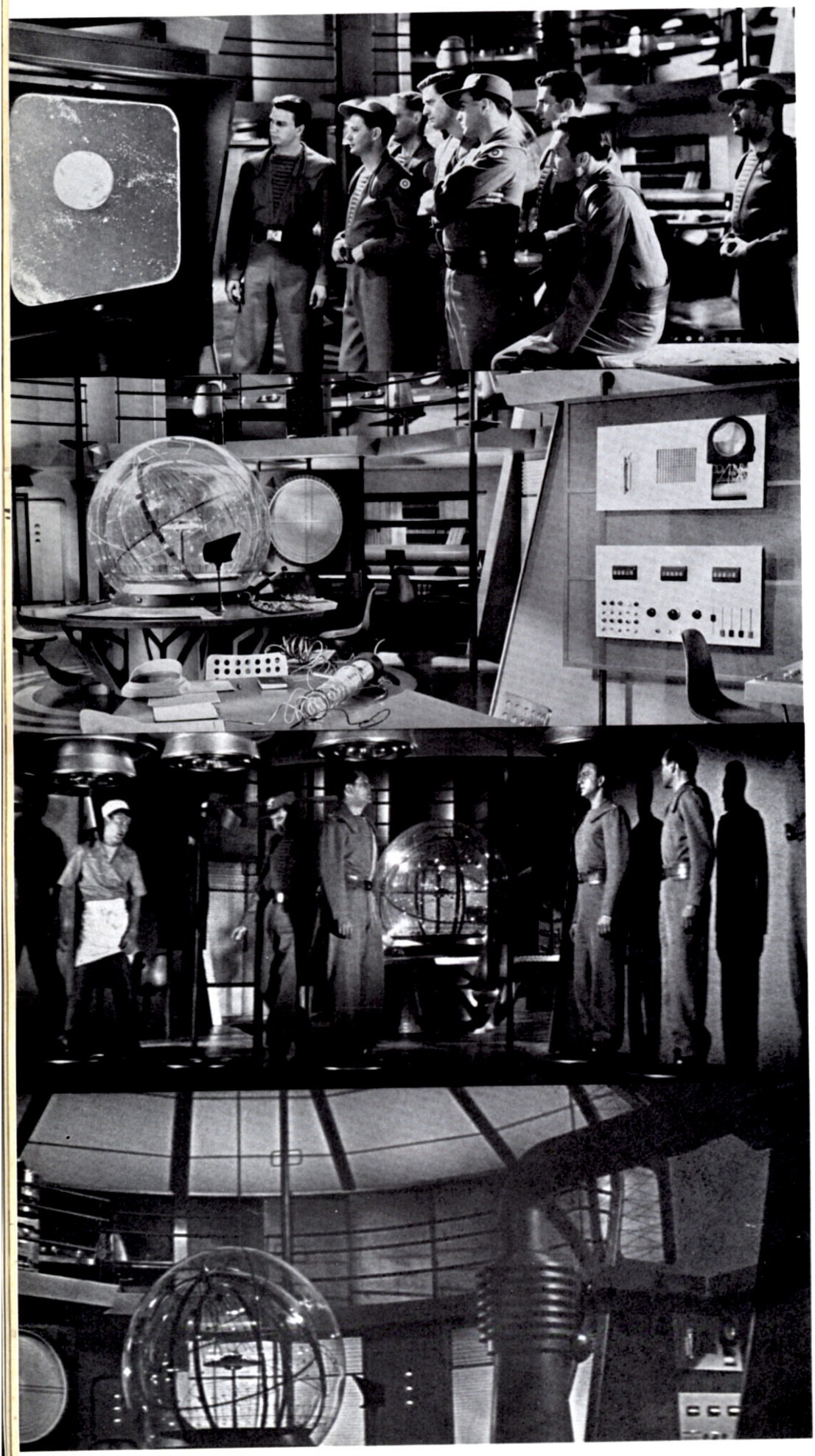
"Gibbons had to approve everything I did," explained Lonergan. "When I had an idea for a set, I had to present that idea in a fairly conclusive form to Gibbons before I could put it into the drafting room." As a first step, Lonergan took Hume's screenplay and broke it down scene by scene as to the various sets required, sketching in the general appearance of each and making note of special props, effects and process photography required. Mentor Huebner worked under Lonergan as production illustrator, preparing full color paintings of design concepts for the approval of Gibbons, Nayfack and Wilcox.* Huebner also prepared storyboards of complex special effects and action sequences. In the structured hierarchy of the MGM art department, Huebner never saw Hume's screenplay and worked only from the rough

*Lonergan does not remember seeing any of Irving Block's preproduction artwork, and suggests that Gibbons may have retained it. "It was not unusual for Gibbons to withhold material like this if he thought we should not be influenced," explained Lonergan. Huebner comments, "Blocky had done some illustrations, but none to my knowledge were ever used." The only one of Irving Block's preproduction paintings which survives today is pictured on page 44 and, if typical, suggests that Block's early conceptual artwork greatly influenced, although perhaps indirectly, the visual "look" of the final film.



Int. Krell Laboratory, built on Stage 21. Stand-ins for Anne Francis and Walter Pidgeon pose for lighting tests. Krell Power Panels are seen in the background, a semicircular bank of lights representing in powers of ten the amount of energy in use from the Krell furnace. The pylon to which the visual educator is attached is seen at right. The educator itself is swung out of frame. Shown foreground is the Master Switch (every mad lab should have one) which, when pressed, causes an irreversible chain reaction in the Krell furnace capable of blowing Altair IV to atoms, one of the screenplay's few lapses in logic or believability. Shown top left are lighting discs, seemingly afloat in midair. Actually muslin cut-outs suspended on four thin wires, the discs ranged in size from 9' to 2' in diameter and were lit with spots from above to provide a glowing effect. Says art director Arthur Lonergan about his design for the laboratory set: "Very early in the preparation of the production I made a number of sketches, trying to find shapes that would be structurally sound and logical and yet be out-of-this-world enough to be unfamiliar to the average viewer. All of these ideas were discussed with both Buddy Gillespie and Cedric Gibbons. The draftsmen and sketch artists in the art department all made contributions toward the development of the final designs that you actually see in the film."


WILCOX
PROD. 1671
SCENE 101
SET 02
INT. KRELL
TUNNEL
AND LAB.



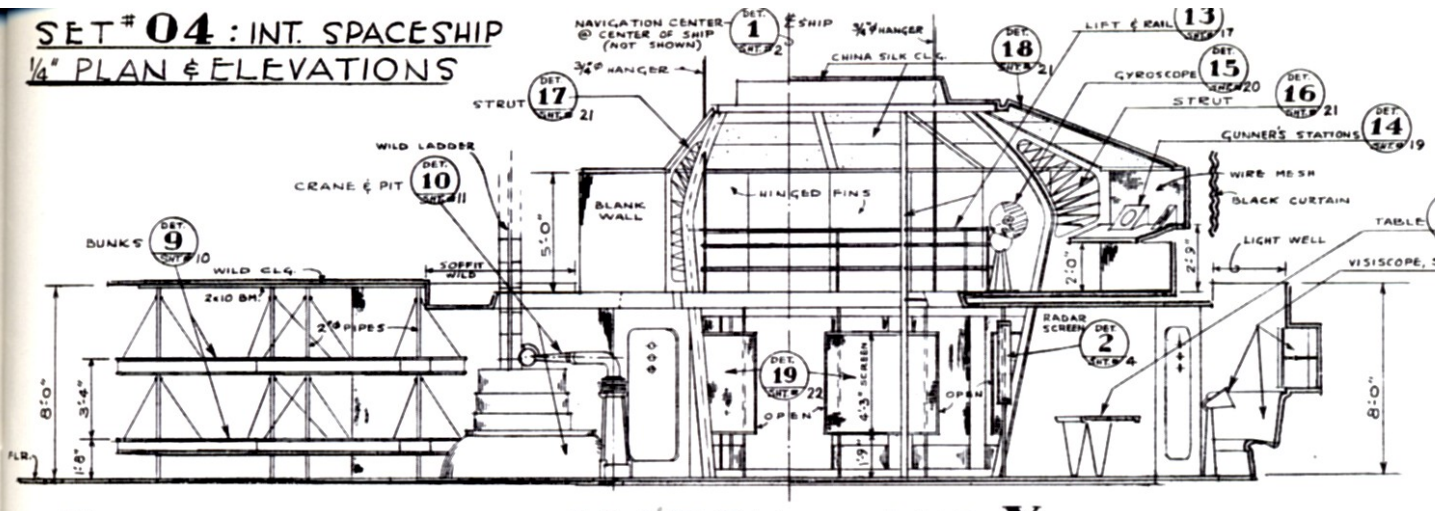
Right: Draftsman Barnette's 1/4" scale drawing of the Main Floor Plan of the Int. Space Ship set, designed by art director Arthur Lonergan, the first of 22 sheets of scale drawings which describes the set in its every detail. The Section of Axis Y (top) refers to numbered design details shown on the other sheets. Letters inside directional circles refer to elevation drawings, several of which are shown. Elevation C (bottom left) shows the doorway to Doc Ostrow's Infirmary. Elevation M (bottom right) shows three decelerator tubes. The original design for the DC stations called for actual tubes in half sections. The front half-tube was clear, permitting a view of the smoke-chamber effect planned for deceleration. The back half-tube was opaque and slid open for entry. The concept was abandoned, perhaps because it so closely resembled a similar effect and design seen in Universal's THIS ISLAND, EARTH, which was released in early 1955 as these ship designs were being drafted. Top Left: The crew congregates in front of the main viewscope as the ship approaches Altair IV (see elevation E on Main Floor Plan). 2: The ship's navigation center as seen past the communications center (see elevation D on Main Floor Plan). The smashed Klystron Frequency Modulator rests atop the table in foreground. 3: The Cook, Bosun, Farman, Adams and Ostrow take their DC stations for the deceleration from hyperspace to sub-light speeds (this view as seen looking along axis X from left on Main Floor Plan). Bottom Left: A high angle on elevation C and the navigation center as seen past the pit crane in the crew's quarters, showing the balcony and ceiling of ship.

sketches and verbal instructions supplied by Lonergan. Due to the nature of FORBIDDEN PLANET, Lonergan collaborated closely with A. Arnold "Buddy" Gillespie, superviser of MGM's special effects department.

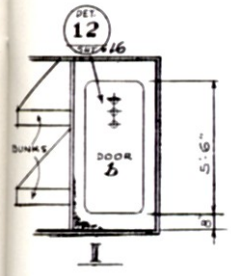
"MGM wanted to make a cheap picture on this," recalled Lonergan. "The hierarchy of the studio wasn't interested in the picture. Buddy [Gillespie] and I got together, and with Gibbons knowing it but not knowing it, we decided we'd go ahead and design the picture the way it *should* be done, regardless of the damn budget." Both Lonergan and Gillespie saw FORBIDDEN PLANET as a unique challenge and creative opportunity to showcase the talents and abilities of their departments. Says Gillespie, "This gave us a chance to create a new world outside our own solar system. It represented a wonderful opportunity. Nobody could prove us wrong. We could do almost anything." Nayfack and Wilcox went along with the design conspiracy, seeing in it a chance to do justice to the material and possibly break away from the confines imposed by a low budget.

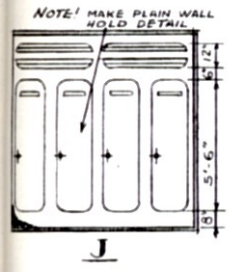
Lonergan and Gillespie first directed their attention to the design of Robby the Robot because it was the most complex of the mechanical props required by the script, to be used extensively throughout the picture in scenes with the main actors. If Robby was not ready and working smoothly by the start of principal photography, the result would be costly production delays. The concept and design of Robby was a collaborative effort. While Cyril Hume finished the FORBIDDEN PLANET screenplay, Irving Block made little idea sketches which attempted to get away from the "tin-man look" which had dominated robot design in films up till then. "I saw the robot to look like [producer] Nicholas Nayfack," said Block. "He was shortish, with stubby legs, somewhat bald, and a very sweet guy." The original

SET # 04 : INT. SPACESHIP
1/4" PLAN & ELEVATIONS



SECTION ON AXIS Y
SCALE: 1/4" = 1'-0"

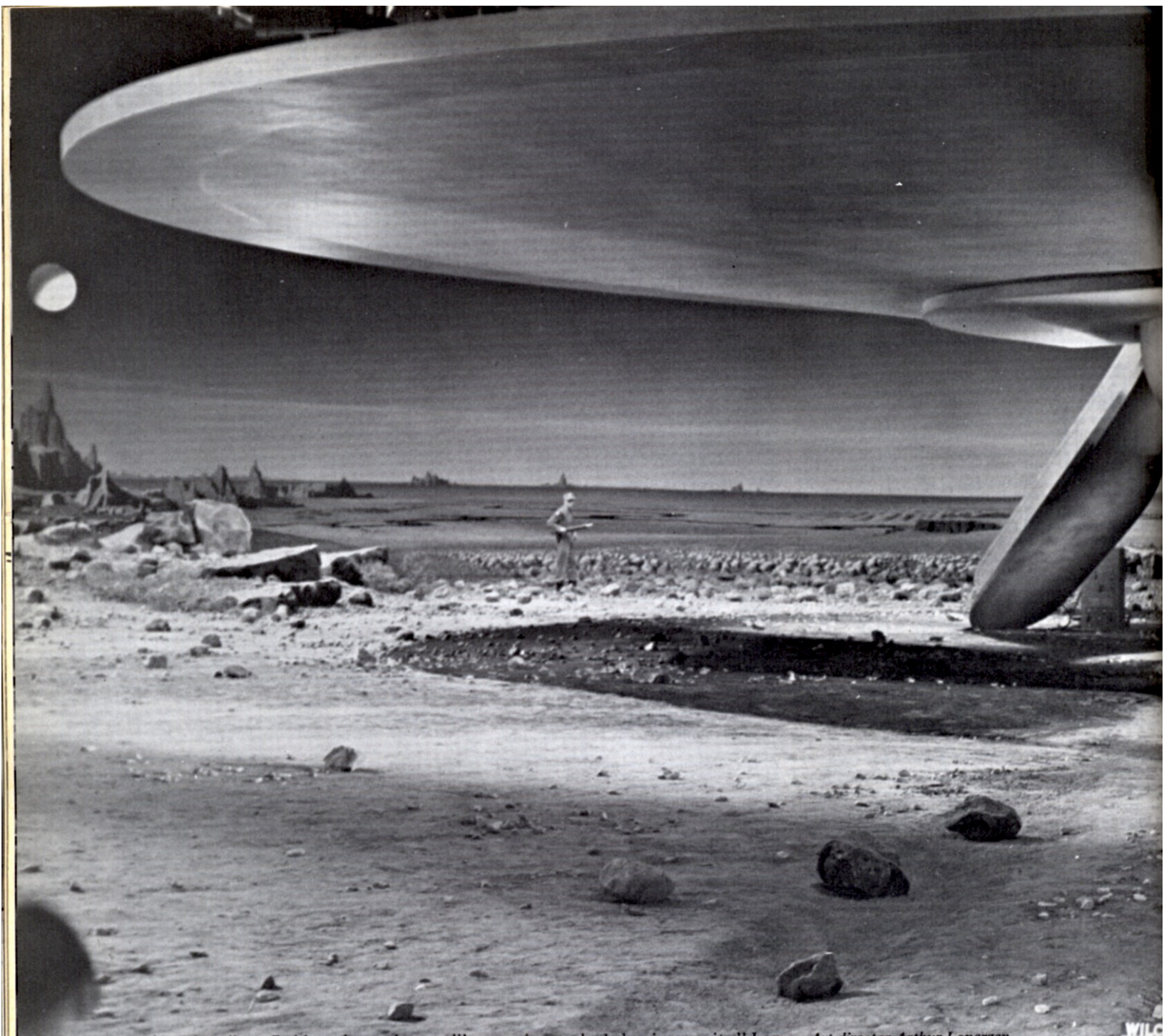




Int. Space Ship

NOTE!
ALL DIMENSION LINES INDICATED WITH DOUBLE ARROWHEADS (→») ARE MEASUREMENTS TO CENTER POINT OF SET

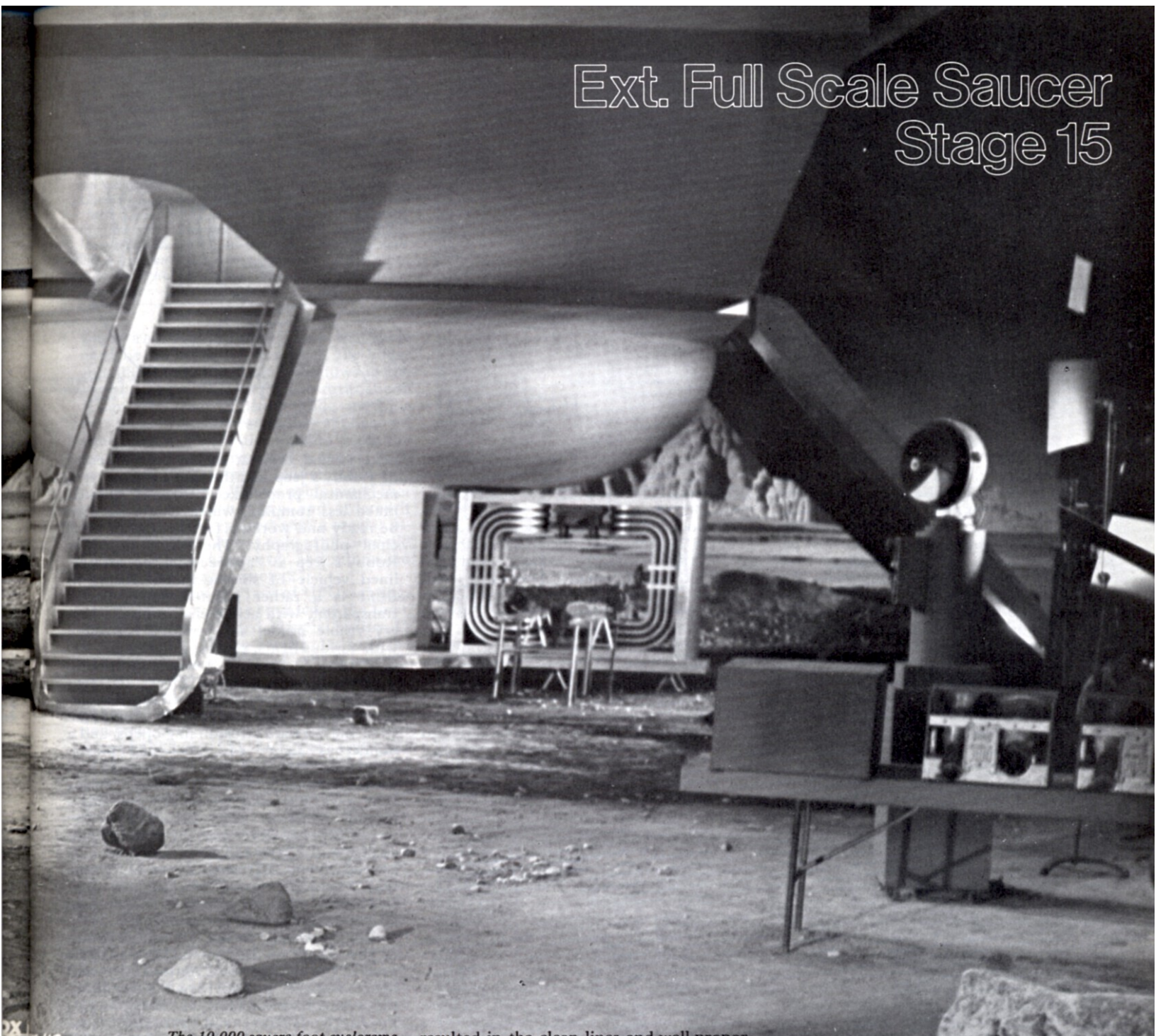
PLAN: MAIN FLOOR
SCALE: 1/4" = 1'-0"



Art director Arthur Lonergan designed only a sixty foot semicircular section of the full scale saucer for actual construction, consisting of only the lower half, complete with landing stairways. This partial mock-up was all that was needed to suggest the presence of the entire ship, one hundred feet in diameter, from camera set-ups that were predetermined with director Fred McLeod Wilcox. Lonergan's department produced detailed scale drawings of the landing area terrain to indicate the placement of rock formations to blend skillfully with the cyclorama backdrop painted to represent the distant Altairian sky and horizon. The 40'x350' backdrop was painted in MGM's scenic department under the supervision of George Gibson, from designs provided by the art department. "Gibson was an accomplished artist," said Lonergan, "and worked closely with my department in developing the cyclorama designs."

screenplay describes Robby along those lines: "He has no face—only a complicated arrangement of electronic gadgets which crackle and light-up at unexpected moments. In spite of his disproportioned arms and legs, he only very roughly suggests the human shape. His hands are tools, and various spare parts (one of these actually a metal hand) are neatly clipped to his body, back and front. He is able to rotate the upper part of his dome, and so seems to 'face' the person addressing him. A small radar antenna [comes] up out of Robby's dome, and [slowly rotates]." From this description, "Buddy" Gillespie came up with the design that everyone liked, according to Arthur Lonergan, after he and Lonergan had sketched and discarded numerous ideas. Gillespie based his design (see sketch page 29) on the shape of the old-fashioned pot-bellied stove, "like the ones they used to have in grocery stores. Up to that time," Gillespie told researcher Paul Mandell, "robots in science fiction films looked like men in starched aluminum suits." Lonergan turned over Gillespie's rough design sketches to production illustrator Mentor Huebner, who refined the aesthetic look of the robot.* Huebner abandoned Gillespie's slip cast rubber legs, similar in design and operation to the arms, and hit upon the jointed ball configuration for the robot's legs. "I thought of having a very short man inside, being able to look out of the stomach, and then have a false head built on him which brings him up to average height," says Huebner. Gillespie's concept had the operator's head inside the robot's clear plastic dome. Huebner's changes didn't alter Gillespie's basic design, but

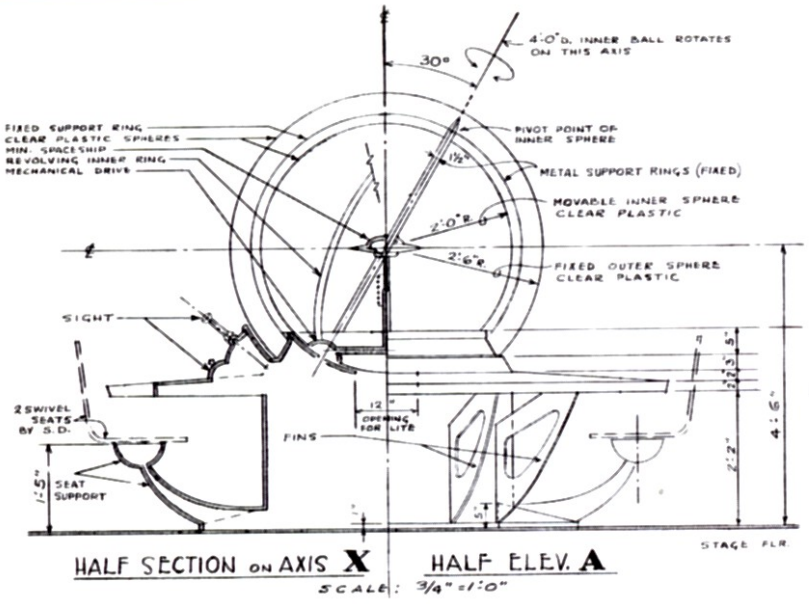
*Huebner claims that Robby was his design. "I designed about fifteen of them, and they finally lit on one that was used," he said. Huebner explains Gillespie's early Robby sketch as a refinement of Huebner's concept. Lonergan, however, remembers that Gillespie originated the idea, and points out that Huebner would refine Gillespie's ideas, not the other way around.

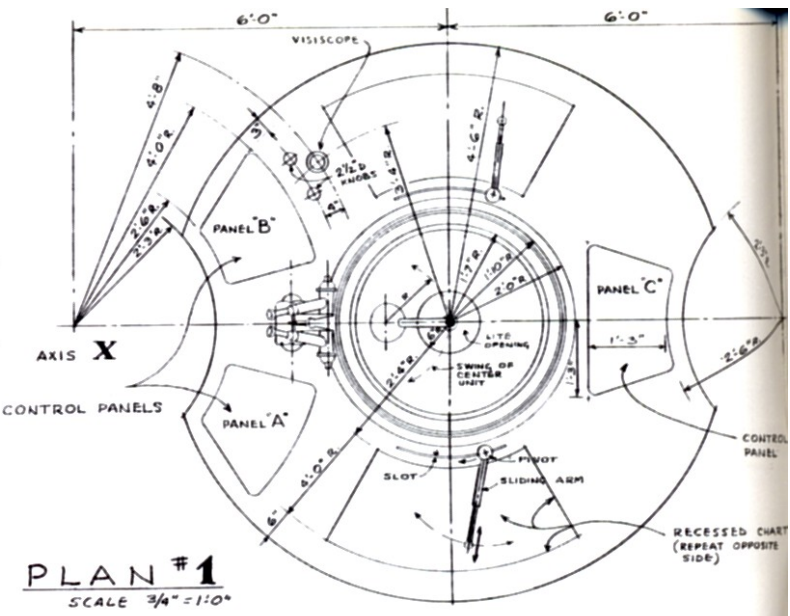


The 10,000 square foot cyclorama painted for the set included a whole field of small rocks at the bottom which receded into the distance. Prop rocks were placed in front of the cyclorama to carry the illusion forward onto the set. The scenic department painted the rocks to precisely match the color and lighting on the rock field in the backing, making the point at which the stage met the cyclorama indistinguishable. A final touch was added by two moons in the sky, made out of plexilite and hung free in front of the backing. "For night scenes," said George Gibson, "we just hit them with light from below and they glowed." Gibson worked closely with cinematographer George Folsey in shooting lighting tests of the backing. The balanced lighting arrangement greatly enchanced the illusion of a plain that stretched for hundreds of miles. For night scenes a tiny light lit up the horizon, representing the glow from Altair IV's twin moons.

resulted in the clean lines and well-proportioned appearance that makes Robby so popular and pleasing to the eye.

At the end of December, Lonergan turned Huebner's work over to Bob Kinoshita, head draftsman of the art department, who would produce the working drawings and blueprints for Robby's construction under Gillespie's supervision. "One of the first things you do when you design a robot or monster," recalled Kinoshita, "is to try to confuse the audience as to where you put the guy inside. It's difficult to completely fool an audience because they know there is someone inside. But if you make an effort to confuse them it can work in your favor and make the whole creation more believable. Robby was designed so that the man inside could see out of the voice box below the glass head. The total concept for Robby came from different areas. Irving Block had some ideas, so did Lonergan, Nayfack and Gillespie. That was one of the problems with





the whole show, I had something like six people to satisfy. That is why I am a firm believer in miniatures. Nayfack wanted one to show the other executives first because Robby was a very important part of the whole film. I had to bend up all sorts of paper clips and wire, and work in all the little indicators to give the Robby miniature that computer effect. The first Robby was a little wood model, and that's what sold the idea." Kinoshita's little Robby eventually became part of a jeep miniature built to film long shots of the robot driving Adams and his officers through the desert toward their first encounter with Morbius.

With his miniature scale model of Robby approved, Kinoshita began drafting the plans from which the robot would be constructed. He completed a 1½" scale plan and elevation drawing of Robby on January 6, 1955 (see page 47), and with the help of other draftsmen in the department spent the next eight weeks on the design and drawing of full scale plans for the construction and assembly of the robot's component parts. Kinoshita's working drawings were turned over to Jack Gaylord, head of MGM's Prop Shop, who was in charge of the molding and assembly of Robby's plastic parts. Gaylord worked out final mechanical problems encountered during construction with his own group of technicians, including Cliff Grant, Andy Thatcher, Rudy Spangler and Eddie Fisher. Mechanical effects expert Glen Robinson worked closely with Gaylord and the prop shop in engineering the electrical system that would make Robby's complex head dome and chest effects panel operate. Electricians Jack McMasters, Bob MacDonald and Max Gebinger installed the wiring and motors required. Gebinger, a glass blower, made Robby's neon voice tubes, which were rigged to a voice actuator by the sound department, to switch on and off according to the sound of Robby's dialogue spoken by the operator. Robby's electrical apparatus was powered and activated from a remote control panel, attached to the robot by a cable which could be plugged into either heel. "I was the nursemaid for Robby," said McMasters, who activated via the controls the six rocker arms in the robot's dome which clicked as if in computation whenever Robby answered a question. For brief shots in which the cable attaching Robby to the remote control panel would be visible, the robot's electrical system could be run off internal batteries, but "they didn't last too long," McMasters remembered, "because Robby drew a lot of power."

Although Robby was designed to stand about 6'11" tall with an outside diameter of 2'5", the tangle of mechanical and electrical internal workings called for a small operator. The task first fell to prop shop technician Eddie Fisher who, at 5'6" in height and 120 pounds in weight, was just the right size. Says Fisher, who is now retired in Oregon, "The close confinement and lack of air was almost overpowering. It was hard work and one could endure it for only short intervals. One of the drawbacks of Robby was that you could not go up or down stairs or any incline. You had to be on a level surface because you could not raise the feet of the robot more than ¾" from the floor. This gave Robby a distinctive, sliding-like mechanical motion in his walk. I had to carry 70 pounds of weight on my back, consisting mostly of Robby's head dome, plus the weight of the batteries on my belt. This made Robby somewhat top-heavy, and being inside amounted to a balancing act. If you bent over too far, the robot would go crashing to the floor, taking you with it!" Fisher never got to play Robby in the film, although he later operated the robot for television work (see page 67). Before the start of shooting, the Screen Actors Guild stepped-in and demanded that an actor be hired to operate Robby because the robot had dialogue. MGM capitulated and Fisher was replaced by actors Frankie Carpenter and Frankie Darro, who alternated in the role during filming.

Robby exudes an aura of class, due in large part to the voice dubbed-in later by actor Marvin Miller, and the dry, witty dialogue written by Cyril Hume, expressing a friendly, benign superiority. Robby proved to be one of the film's most powerful science fiction concepts. Story writers Adler and Block exhibited their knowledge of the field by including in Robby's programming the three laws of robotics as proposed by Isaac Asimov, which have as their overriding directive the command to preserve and protect human life. Thus Robby symbolizes the harmonious synthesis of scientific advance and social good, at last the powerful tool which man is unable to turn upon himself.

After Robby, Lonergan and Gillespie next turned their attention to the design of Robby's jeep and the ship's tractor, two mechanical props like the robot, though much less complex, which would have to be ready and working for the start of principal photography. The script describes Robby's jeep as "a three-wheeled, streamlined vehicle of shining metal. Rising in front is a rather pointed dome, partly transparent, with active electronic machinery visible inside, and studded elsewhere with various lights, gauges, gadgets, etc. Behind this, enclosed in transparent plastic wind-shielding is baggage space, and two fore-and-aft passenger seats, arranged something like an Irish jaunting car. The dome stirs, the forward streamlining opens, and a ponderous figure of metal and plastic stands up into full view." Lonergan did preliminary sketches of this jeep concept (see page 38) and ideas for the ship's tractor, which is never described in the script. Gillespie developed the final designs, changing the jeep radically, working with art department draftsmen on the blueprints that would be turned over to Jack Gaylord's prop shop for construction (see page 63 for tractor designs and concepts).

Lonergan next turned his full attention to the design of the four major sets to be used in the filming: 1) Exterior Desert and Space Ship; 2) Interior Space Ship; 3) Interior and Exterior Morbius Home; and 4) Interior Krell Tunnel and Laboratory. Lonergan found few descriptive passages for any of the sets required in the Hume screenplay, outside of a few sketchy details defined by the action and dialogue. "The interesting thing," says Lonergan, "is how to research a project like this. There is simply no place to go. You have to reach up to the stars and grab onto something. The art department was used to having a particular field of research. The only way to start on this film was to field a lot of ideas, let some go and latch onto the rest."

Lonergan drew upon his past experience as an architect in designing the interior and exterior set of the Morbius House of Tomorrow. Like Ken Adam, who much later was acclaimed for the scope and complexity of his futuristic set design on the James Bond films, Arthur Lonergan on FORBIDDEN PLANET dispensed with the customary plans for the Earth houses, concluding that, with its windows and doors it was too claustrophobic an atmosphere. Says Lonergan, "I made the assumption,

Top Right: Prop shop technician Max Gebinger puts finishing touches on part of the ship's control center, a miniature saucer inside two clear plastic spheres, calibrated for celestial navigation. Said special effects man Bob MacDonald of the late Gebinger, "He was a genius whose versatile knowledge helped make the art department designs practical. He was a glass blower, an electrical scientist, and had a PhD from a prestigious German university." Bottom Right: Lt. Farman (Jack Kelly) peers into the visiscope while piloting the ship. The navigation center was "wild" (movable) on wheels to provide for ease of camera set-ups in the center of the ship. Left: Draftsman Barnette's 3/4" scale drawing of the Navigation center.

which isn't too far-fetched now, that there need be no separation between the house and the forest. We had no windows in the Morbius house. Everything was futuristic in design. We tried to avoid using anything that would resemble an earthly appliance. I remember a frustrating moment after the set decorator had designed a special high back chair for Morbius' study. While preparing for a scene, Wilcox complained that the chair blocked his view and ordered it removed. It was replaced with a regular office swivel chair. It was only after tired old Cedric Gibbons came over and interceded that the error was corrected."

Influenced by the rash of UFO sightings bursting-out across the country at the time, the space ship, United Planets Cruiser C-57D, became a flying saucer. Its only description in the screenplay calls it an "object of polished metal, shaped along the general lines of the planet Saturn." To elaborate on the basic design the production crew traveled to a well-known arena of scientific debate—Cal. Tech. Says Gillespie: "The scientists were extremely helpful and gave us a lot of ideas. They looked over some of our sketches and approved of the designs for the crew's quarters, the navigation devices and the control panels."

After breaking down the script into a series of preliminary thumb-nail sketches, art director Arthur Lonergan produced 1/4" scale drawings of each set to establish the design details. These were discussed in meetings with art department chief Cedric Gibbons, producer Nicholas Nayfack and director Fred McLeod Wilcox, and changes were made if necessary. When Lonergan's 1/4" scale drawings met with approval, they were turned over to the drafting department for the production of a complete set of 1/4" scale plans, sections and elevations from which the construction department would provide a budget estimate. The model shop used the plans to put together a 1/4" scale miniature which was returned to the art department for final painting and detailing. Production illustrators used the miniatures to make a series of full color paintings of each set. The miniatures and paintings were needed for a full production meeting of all department heads at which the final budget for each set design was determined. Such a meeting at the end of January gave Lonergan final approval for his design of the Interior and Exterior Morbius Home, and art department draftsmen began work on the 3/4" scale and full scale drawings from which the set would be constructed. David Freedman was assigned as production manager on February 9, and the start of principal photography was set to begin April 1.

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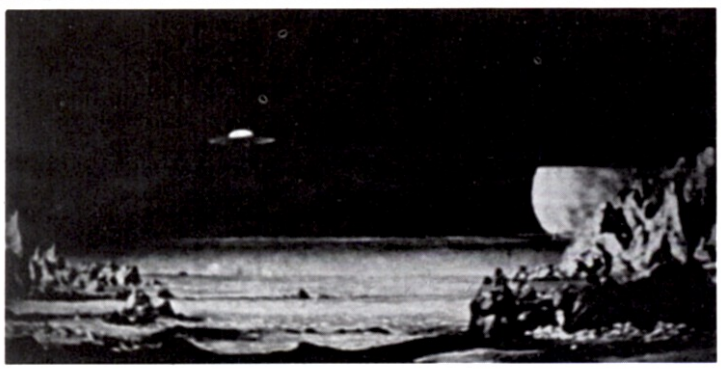


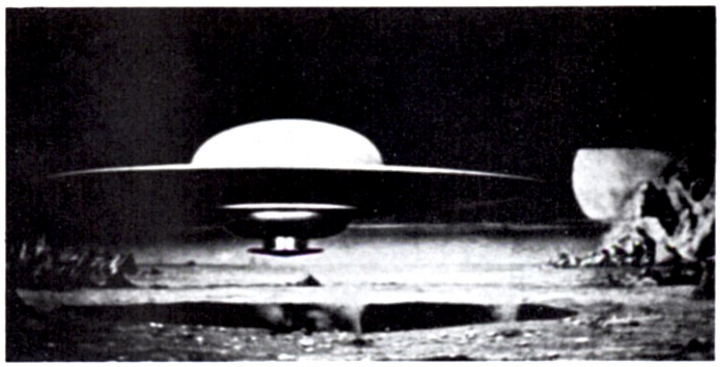
Filming the large 88" saucer model on the huge miniature set of the surface of Altair IV constructed on Lot 3. The angle shown at right is not seen in the film. George Gibson's scenic department supplied a huge cyclorama backing for the set, measuring 300' wide by 75' high, painted by Ed Helms and Leo Atkinson. The lower half of the backing rose forty feet, then stepped back and rose another thirty-five feet, representing the separation between Altair IV's greenish atmosphere and black space. Two moons in the sky were painted on muslin cut-outs, pasted onto the backing, and then partially obscured by painted cloud formations. The backing faced west for illumination by the sun, tilted back at an angle of about 70°. Filming on the set couldn't begin until about 11:00 in the morning when the sun became high enough in the sky, but could continue for the rest of the day until late afternoon. Mountain ranges and rock formations in front of the backing were profile cut-outs up to 30 feet high and 50 feet in length, set up in different planes which could be moved in relation to one another to change perspective for varying camera angles. "Buddy" Gillespie supervised filming the saucer-landing at four to six times normal speed, in two cuts using both the 44" and 88" saucer models to create the illusion of the ship growing in size from a small disc in the distance (bottom middle) until it nearly fills the screen and lands in the foreground (bottom right). The two cuts were separated in editing by a live-action shot inside the ship. For the second cut of the large saucer touching down, Gillespie was able to move his camera forward for a slightly different angle and unobstructed view of the landing zone without noticeably increasing the size relationship of the background elements because of the miniature set's great size. Special effects men Glen Robinson and Bob MacDonald rigged the saucer models for filming on wires connected to a car which ran on an overhead track spanning the set from the top of the backing on the east to telephone poles erected on the west. The connecting wires could be raised or lowered causing the saucers to pitch and waver as they descended, as if caught in the powerful gravitation of Altair IV. The wires also carried electrical current to operate the saucer mechanisms. The motors, lights and electronics inside each model added to its weight and stability. The large 88" model weighed 300 pounds. Air jets beneath the surface of the set where the 88" model lands disturbed the dust and dirt to show the effect of the ship's landing ray, an animation effect to be composited later (bottom right, note that the landing ray is not yet composited in this frame blow-up from the workprint). Gillespie also used the Lot 3 miniature set to film three cuts of Robby's jeep. He moved his camera out onto the set to the point where the saucer had landed to film two cuts of the jeep as it would be viewed in the distance by crewmembers at the landing site (see page 40, bottom). These cuts, which showed only a moving cloud of dust were used to show Robby's arrival at the ship and his subsequent departure with Commander Adams and his officers. A third cut was filmed for the departure sequence, using a miniature jeep constructed by the prop shop (see page 37, bottom left), to run on rails sunk into the miniature set. Gillespie moved his camera in for a closer angle on this shot (bottom left), which was eventually edited out of the film during its previewing stage.

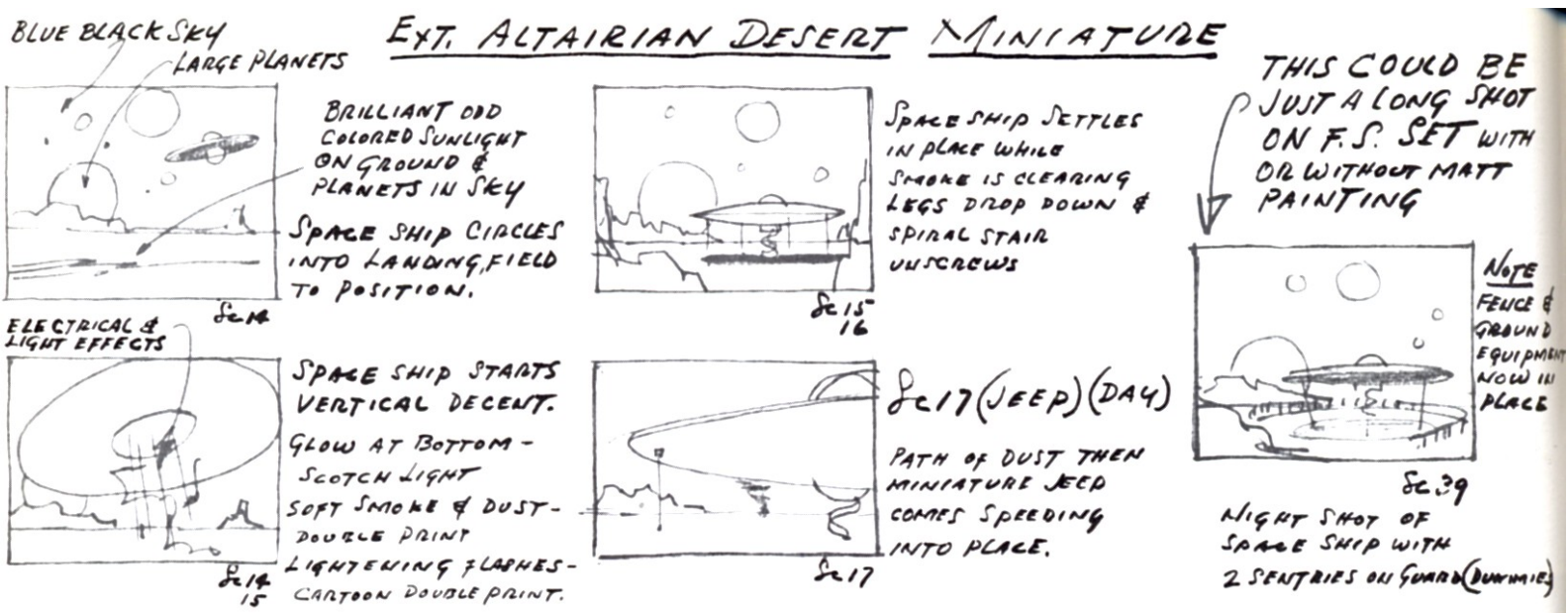


Ext. Altair IV
Outdoor Miniature Set
Lot 3









Woman's costume designer Helen Rose began to work on the outfits to be worn by Anne Francis, already cast as Altaira. Francis had worked on Nayfack's previous picture at MGM, THE SCARLET COAT. With one exception, a flowing Grecian robe of white which Altaira designs to please Commander Adams' request for less provocative clothing, all of Alta's outfits were very short and leggy, called by Rose the "first" mini-skirts. Two of the designers' more imaginative costumes, shown on page 44, were never used in the film. Since Rose designed only for women, Walter Plunkett was left with the task of designing uniforms for the men and a wardrobe for Morbius. The script also called for helmets and radiation armor to be worn by the crew as they unshipped the saucer's main core to power communications back to earth, but this special costume idea was scrapped when the film began to go over budget. "Very frankly, it's one of my least favorite pictures," says Plunkett, who designed the costumes for GONE WITH THE WIND, SINGIN' IN THE RAIN, and many MGM greats. "We ran into all sorts of problems. They didn't want anything too extreme or exaggerated. Helen [Rose] probably had the same trouble too, because Anne Francis ended-up looking like a Rockette instead of something of the future."

Construction of the Interior and Exterior of the Morbius House of Tomorrow got underway in mid-February, as the art department finished work on the plans needed for the construction of other sets. Walter Pidgeon was cast to play Morbius on February 22. An established character actor who received top billing on the film, Pidgeon was the closest to real starpower that producer Nayfack could get on a modest budget. Leslie Nielsen, cast as Commander Adams, was primarily a TV actor at the time with only one previous feature film credit, a small role in THE VAGABOND KING, made the year before. The rest of the leading roles were filled by young, inexpensive performers like Warren Stevens, Jack Kelly, Richard Anderson, Earl Holliman and George Wallace. Crewmen with smaller speaking roles were filled by Bob Dix, Jimmy Thompson and James Drury, actors being groomed by MGM for bigger parts.

As the film was being cast, set construction continued throughout February, with work commencing on the Interior Space Ship set, and on Stage Fifteen where carpenters were hammering together the facade of the full size flying saucer while the art department prepared the final working drawings on the remaining Krell laboratory set. The sets of the saucer exterior and the Morbius home required huge painted backings called "cycloramas," prepared by MGM's scenic department under the supervision of George Gibson. These beautifully detailed backdrops created strangely alien vistas which could never have been equalled by any earthly location. "Gibson was an elaborate genius at that sort of thing," remembers cinematographer George Folsey. "When you stood at one end of the stage after the backing was completed, you almost couldn't believe you were on a stage. You had to walk right up to it to believe it was a backing."

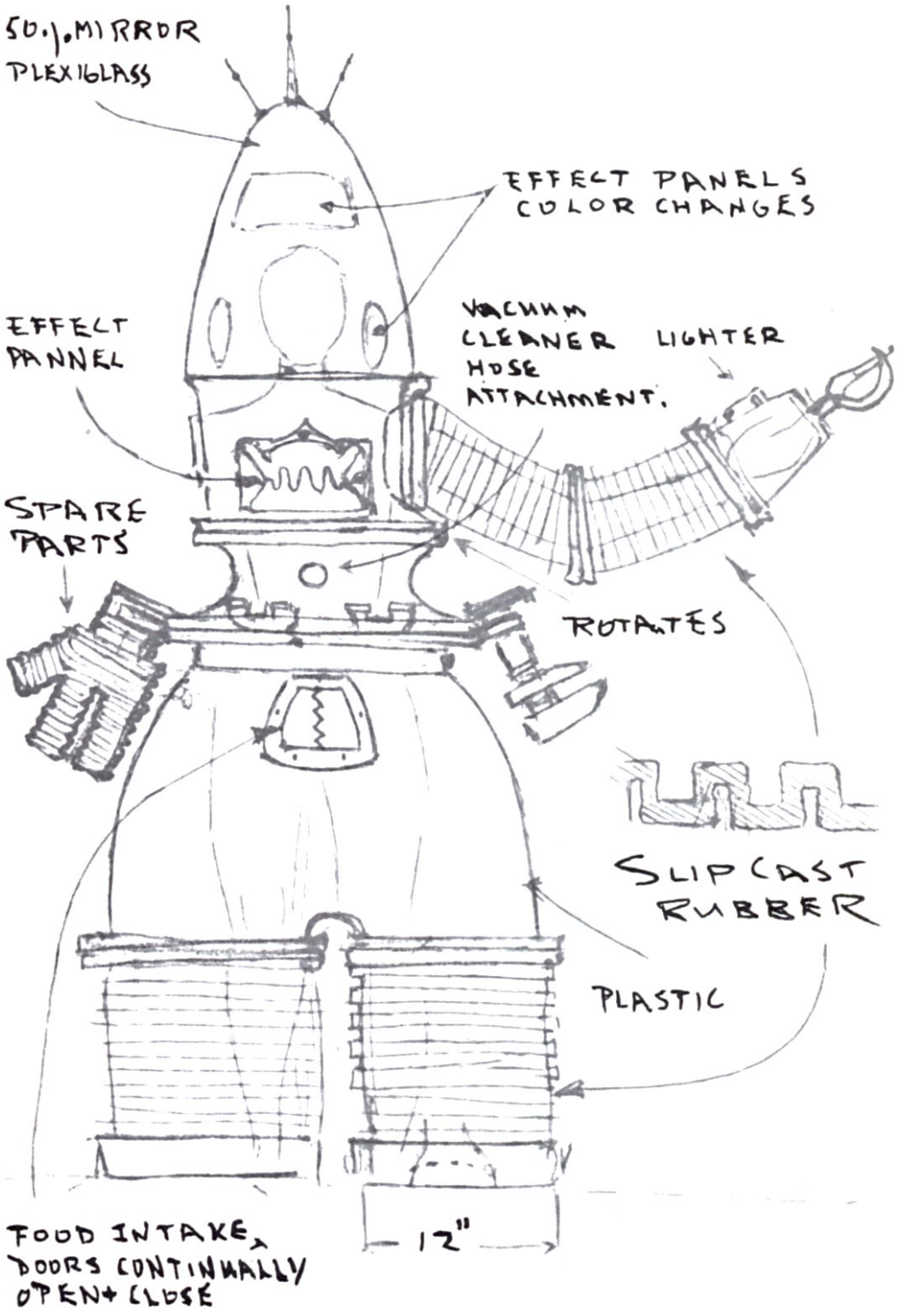
George Gibson had developed a technique in the field of scenic art that was specially suited for motion picture work. The use of huge, full color painted backdrops developed as a result of MGM's production of THE WIZARD OF OZ in 1938. At the time the backdrops were being painted on unoccupied stages at the studio, an unwieldy process. Art department chief Cedric Gibbons saw the value of the backdrops in full color film production and recognized the need for a special facility to produce them faster and more economically. Gibbons pushed through the construction of a building for his scenic department designed by Gibson specifically for the painting of cycloramas, in time to complete half the work needed for THE WIZARD OF OZ. The building, still in use at MGM today, houses up to four 40'x100' frames, stretched with unbleached muslin, for painting at one time. The frames can be raised or lowered through the floor of the building, manipulated at will by the artists to access each section of the muslin to be painted.

"FORBIDDEN PLANET was an exciting picture to work on," said Harry Tepker, George Gibson's chief assistant. "We were all painters," added Gibson, "given to imagination. Arthur [Lonergan] was a damn good artist as well as being an architect. It was one of the better efforts the department was responsible for." Gibson's scenic department received set designs from the art department indicating the size of cyclorama needed for each set, its specific placement on the set in relation to set elements, as well as color sketches of the general features to be painted on the cycloramas, worked out by Lonergan and production illustrator Mentor Huebner. From the art department sketches and specifications, Gibson designed each of the cycloramas to be painted. Draftsman Ben Carre rendered each cyclorama design in the proper perspective to give it the desired depth of field. The landscapes of Altair IV would feature a sky of strange greenish hues. The script called for the sky to be a "startling but beautiful chartreuse color." Research by the production team at Cal Tech and other universities had suggested this possibility, and it provided just the right touch to differentiate the heavens of Altair IV from earthly skies. Painter F. Wayne Hill came up with just the right paint mixtures to get the effect desired. Various artists in the department used the agreed upon color scheme to produce large scale replicas of each cyclorama for final approval. The scale replicas were marked off in sections, corresponding to the 40'x100' framed muslin canvases on which the final cycloramas would be painted, and each section was broken down into smaller squares to precisely transfer the details of the backdrop onto corresponding squares marked-off on the full-size backings. Prior to painting, cornstarch sizing was applied to the muslin to close up the pores and lay down a texture. Polyvinyl water-soluble paints for application were mixed in one, two and five gallon buckets after estimates were made as to the amount of each color required. The green sky was laid-on first using splatter guns. Then, working from the horizon line, the basic browns of the mountains and terrain were laid-on. On top of the basic color scheme the sky and landscape were drawn in more detail, and color added to define shape and shadow and source of lighting. Blends were achieved with the splatter gun, just like an artist's airbrush only on a huge scale. Each added layer of color further refined and textured the fantastic landscapes with different colored formations that went through hues of pink, lavender and ochre. Painters working on FORBIDDEN PLANET cycloramas included Clark Provins, Ed Helms, Leo Atkinson, William H. Gibson (George Gibson's brother), Tommy Duff, Arthur Rider, Bob Woolfe, Bob Overbeck and Bill Smart. The finished backdrops were taken down, rolled up and transport-

Right: Special effects supervisor A. Arnold "Buddy" Gillespie's original concept sketch for Robby the Robot. The aesthetic look was refined by production illustrator Mentor Huebner. Bottom: Never say "never." Robby sits down to pilot the ship at the end of the film. Note painted cardboard leg attachment and use of replaceable hand-tools. Left: Art director Arthur Lonergan's preproduction sketches calling for the use of an Ext. Altairian Desert miniature set, eventually constructed on Lot 3 to film the saucer landing. Lonergan's early saucer design called for a central spiral stair as described in the screenplay, with prop legs which dropped down from the hull's underside for support.

ed to the sound stage for hanging. The cycloramas got their name from the fact that they were hung in a predetermined arc, providing the appearance of a natural perspective when viewed through the camera. Prior to painting, the 40'x100' muslin sections were nailed at top and bottom to wood batons which could be bent into the gentle arc required. The sections were sewn together and touched up on the sound stage after hanging.

The sets of FORBIDDEN PLANET would occupy over 98,000 square feet of space on the largest sound stages at MGM. Construction of the major sets began to fall behind schedule in March as work was about to begin on the Krell laboratory, and the film's start date was moved back from April 1 to April 15. When the art department delivered the final large scale plans for each set to the construction department, the budget was re-estimated, and if necessary designs were revised to keep as close to the original budget estimate as possible. "But the construction department exceeded their budget on every set," remembered Lonergan. "Those sets were almost impossible to estimate. It was a new kind of picture for them and they didn't have any precedent as to how much it would cost." Joseph J. Cohn, an executive in charge of studio production, complained to Dore Schary that FORBIDDEN PLANET was going way over budget. As prop shop supervisor Jack Gaylord remembers, "We ran out of money on this picture twice before we had the thing finished." Schary took stock of the situation by visiting the sets under construction, and got caught-up in the excitement of seeing them take shape. "I was fascinated with what they were doing," said Schary, "just fascinated." Schary always got protests from the production department whenever a picture was exceeding budget projections, but he had a very close working relationship with production executive Joe Cohn. "I remember on that picture I just said, 'Oh, come on, we've got something very good, just give the money, transfer funds.'" With Schary's approval for the extra expense, FORBIDDEN PLANET began to escalate into the high budget catagory. As Lonergan recalls, "Schary wasn't interested in this picture at all until we started to build sets. When they were half-finished, he became fascinated by it, and was down on the stages every day, watching us build them." But the studio executives decided to cancel the construction of some of the full scale sets planned to represent the surface of Altair IV and parts of the Krell furnace and ventilation shaft, as well as plans for special furniture and exotic foilage for the exterior sets, which would have driven production costs even further over budget. "We





Robby, the Robot reports for work at MGM April 25, 1955.



Right: Frankie Darro, inside Robby, poses with crewmen Richard Grant (left) and Morgan Jones (right), as effects workers help him on with his feet. Darro wore black pancake makeup on his face so as not to be visible behind Robby's neon voice tubes. Left Page: Effectsmen Cliff Grant (left) and Andy Thatcher help Darro on with the metal and leather harness which attaches him to Robby. A wooden frame holds the robot's body in place during the operation. Frankie Carpenter stands at the ready with special shoes to be worn by Darro, to fasten onto the bottom of the robot's feet. At right in background lies Robby's head dome, ready for installation.

wouldn't let them go as far as they wanted to," said executive Joe Cohn. "We made substantial cuts. They wanted to design all special furniture, which we wouldn't permit." Set decorator Hugh Hunt remembers having to work on a very tight budget, and used his ingenuity to borrow special furniture and redress existing pieces. To save money, Hunt stripped upholstry from aluminum-framed chairs first used in GRAND HOTEL (1932) and added seats and backs of molded plastic, made by the prop shop, to give them a futuristic look. Even with some economies, the FORBIDDEN PLANET sets took more than eight weeks to construct at a final cost of nearly a million dollars, exceeding the original budget estimate projected for the cost of the entire film.

Shooting began Friday, April 15 on the exterior space ship set, and expanded to the interior space ship set the following week. A. Arnold Gillespie took over the camera set-ups for the sequence of the ship's crew battling the oncoming Id mon-









ster with laser cannon and hand weapons. Gillespie supervised the shooting of any scenes that would later be combined with special animation effects. "We all knew when Buddy [Gillespie] was on the scene," remembered stagehand Jim McClennan, now in charge of MGM's construction department, "because the building just reeked of his stinking pipe! He smoked tobacco from the Forbidden Planet!" For the complex Id sequence, Glen Robinson rigged halters with piano wire under the uniforms of two stuntmen, to yank them across the stage and lift them in the air, as if in the grip of the invisible attacker. Red gels were used on the lighting for the sequence, so simulate the glow of the crew's energy beams corruscating over the Id's invisible form. Shooting moved onto the interior and exterior set of the Morbius home for 2½ week's work on May 9, and concluded with a week of shooting beginning May 13 on the Krell laboratory set.

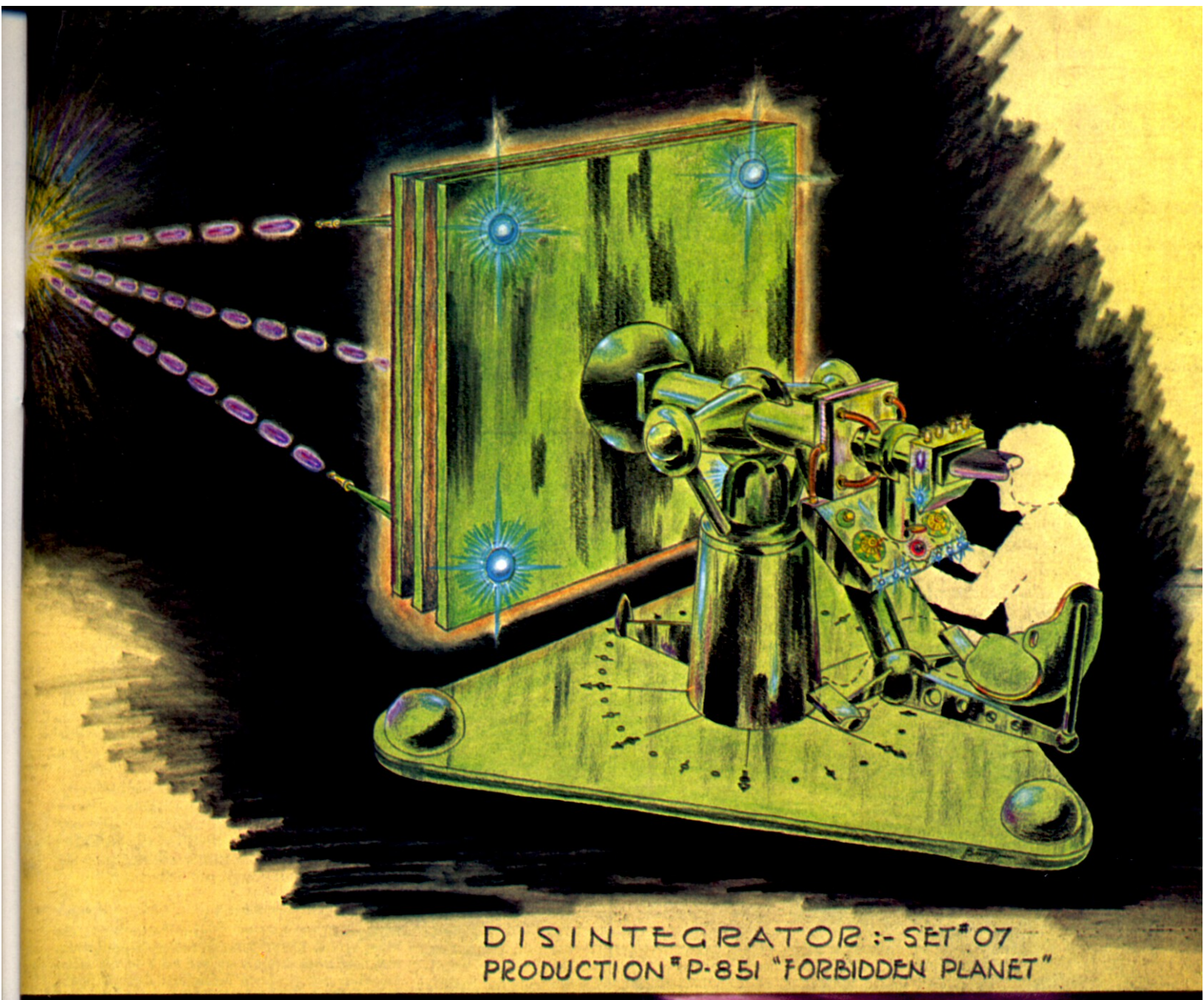
While director Fred McLeod Wilcox put the actors through their paces on the major sets, A. Arnold Gillespie filmed miniatures constructed by the prop shop on stage fourteen. Today, miniature work and special effects are usually left for postproduction, after the principal photography is completed. But the facilities at MGM were extensive, and Gillespie frequently had as many as three units filming special effects simultaneously, while work on physical effects needed by the main unit proceeded as well. Gillespie's special effects crew was headed by Glen Robinson, and included A. D. Flowers, Logan Frazee and Dean Pearson, mechanical assistant Joe Zomar, electricians Jack McMasters, Bob MacDonald and Max Gebinger, consultant Earl McCoy, and assistants Chuck Frazier, Dion Hansen (Glen Robinson's son-in-law) and Eddie Fisher.

The largest miniature on stage fourteen was the Krell ventilation shaft, across which Morbius leads his awed companions on a tour of the Krell wonders. The miniature shaft constructed by the prop shop was about eight feet square and thirty feet in length, built horizontally on its side. At the far end a perspective painting supplied by the scenic department gave the impression that the shaft descended a dizzying 7800 levels, with lighted globes and electrical discharge elevators rigged to travel up its length. Gillespie filmed the miniature with a mechanized camera, as if suspended far above the bridge spanning the shaft, turning slowly to provide just the right touch of vertigo to the illusion of its awesome depth. The camera was mounted on two tubular tracks, its tilting motion precisely controlled by a cable and induction motor. The mechanized camera provided the stability of a locked-off camera at the end of the move so that a matte element of figures walking across could be composited in the scene to establish scale. Director Wilcox filmed the matte element at the Bekins Van and Storage building in Hollywood. It was the tallest building nearby that provided a clear view of a large parking lot below. With the parked automobiles cleared away, Wilcox sent Folsey's camera crew to the top of the building, and used midgets, costumed to duplicate the actors, in order to make the walking figures below appear to be no bigger than tiny black specks (see photo page 56).

Effects man Bob MacDonald was in charge of rigging a miniature Krell door needed for rear-screen process work during principal photography on the laboratory set, for the scene where the Id breaks through a barrier of solid Krell metal to attack Morbius. The four foot square miniature door and surrounding archway was built about quarter scale by the prop shop on stage fourteen and fitted with two metal doors. The first was a thin sheet of steel used to film the glow of the metal door as the energy of an entire planet focused by the Id brought it close to its melting point. MacDonald rigged a furnace on tracks on the opposite side of the door, which was wheeled in next to the steel after it was brought up to heat, causing the metal to change color as it glowed from red to white hot. The steel door was replaced by a thin sheet of lead, backed with a layer of special Zirconium compound developed by Special Effects Manufacturing Company in Pacoima. The compound didn't burn rapidly when ignited, but became hot and incandescent, remaining intact like a coal after the thin sheet had melted. This layer of coals was knocked down from behind to show the door beginning to crumble as the Id broke through (see photo on page 45).

Glen Robinson rigged the saucer models for filming the outer space scenes on stage fourteen, using a star field backdrop prepared by the scenic department. The backdrop of opaque black velvet was 25' high and 63' in length, pierced with tiny holes to represent stars and lit from behind. To provide a dimensional quality to the outer space scenes, several spheres representing planetary bodies of varying sizes (1', 1'6", 2', 4'6") were hung in front of the backdrop and moved in relation to it and one another in scenes where the camera moved in panning or tracking shots. Robinson used the smaller 20" and 44" saucer models, hung with music wire and remote controlled from an overhead track. The track and rigging used to control the movement of the saucers is still in place on the ceiling of stage fourteen today. For one shot where the saucer flies in from the distance and then overhead out of frame, Robinson used both models, starting at the back of the backdrop with the 20" model, and replacing it mid-shot with the 44" model after the smaller saucer had advanced nearer enough to the camera to equal the size of the 44" model when placed at the back of the backdrop. The 44" model was then filmed as it was moved from the back of the backdrop out past the camera to complete the shot. The switch of

Top Right: A preproduction sketch of one of the ship's Main Batteries, prepared by the prop shop for final okay prior to construction. Props such as this, the crew's handweapons, communication devices, and electronic gear were designed and constructed in the prop shop, independent of the art department, which supplied the designs for the major sets. The Main Batteries were fabricated out of wood and painted to match the ship, for use in scenes where the crew battles the oncoming Id (bottom right). Top Left: Art director Arthur Lonergan's early sketch concept of the Id monster. Lonergan turned over rough ideas such as this to production illustrator Mentor Huebner for further development. Huebner refined Lonergan's sketch into a concept for the Id that was insect-like in appearance (middle and bottom left), one of the many approaches rejected by producer Nicholas Nayfack. Freelance animator Ken Hultgren was hired by Joshua Meador to come up with the Id concept that was finally used.



DISINTEGRATOR :- SET "07
PRODUCTION "P-851 "FORBIDDEN PLANET"







the models is nearly indistinguishable in the shot and is betrayed only by a subtle change of lighting. To film the scene where Space Cruiser C-57D banks-in for a landing over Altair IV, Robinson set-up a disc twenty feet in diameter on rollers in front of the star field backdrop. The disc, prepared by the scenic department, was modeled and painted to represent the surface of Altair IV, could be tilted at whatever angle desired for filming, and was capable of revolution to represent the rotation of Altair IV on its axis. Gillespie supervised the actual photography working with his own camera crew. Max Fabian was Gillespie's key cinematographer on miniatures, and Harold Wellman, who now works with Irwin Allen, was also used. Harold Lipstein specialized in shooting process photography for Gillespie.

At the end of May, as principal photography neared completion, construction had begun on Lot 3 of a miniature set representing the surface of Altair IV to film sequences of the saucer landing (see photo page 26). Lot 3, which contained standing outdoor sets like the St. Louis street, also contained a large 300 foot square water tank for filming special effects. The tank was thirty inches deep and had a twenty-foot-deep pit at its center for sinking large ship models. The tank was also frequently used for the construction of miniature sets not requiring water, like the planet set, which took up two-thirds of the total tank area. The miniature set was constructed outdoors because there was no stage facility high enough at MGM to accomodate the huge 75 foot tall backdrop needed to represent the planet's sky and horizon and the rigging necessary to manipulate the saucer miniatures from an overhead track. Sunlight was also needed for illumination in order to film the miniatures at high speed for realism. In those days the fastest color film was about ASA 24. Cameraman Max Fabian had developed his own technique in filming miniatures for Gillespie. He overlit and stopped-down in order to carry focal depth. "Fabian was probably one of the most successful miniature photographers in the business," declared Bob MacDonald, "and because of the technique he used we had to shoot in sunlight."

The shooting of principal photography was wrapped-up on Friday, May 27, after approximately thirty-nine days of filming. Work on the picture for the director, the cast and most of the crew was over. The shooting schedule had been a short one, more befitting a low-budget programmer at MGM, according to editor Ferris Webster, who remembers that shooting on THE PICTURE OF DORIAN GRAY had lasted 130 days. Webster had been brought in at the start of principal photography, and cut FORBIDDEN PLANET as the shooting had progressed. A first assembly of the footage was ready by June 1, only a few days after shooting ended. Producer Nicholas Nayfack now took charge of the picture and began an extended and costly period of postproduction that would last more than eight months. The effects designed by A. Arnold Gillespie and Arthur Lonergan called for the extensive use of cartoon animation, to be composited with both live action and miniature photography. Nayfack turned to the animation experts, and approached Walt Disney with a proposal for his studio to supply the animation needed for FORBIDDEN PLANET. Most studios, including MGM, had their own cartoon animation departments, but Disney was the only studio in town with a department devoted solely to cartoon animation *effects*. Luckily for Nayfack, Disney's animation effects department, run by Joshua Meador, was not busy at the time, and a deal was struck by MGM for the use of Meador's services.

Joshua Lawrence Meador, the artist who brought FORBIDDEN PLANET's Id Monster to life via animation, passed away in 1965. His son Phil, who was only fifteen years-old at the time, now also works in effects at Walt Disney Productions under Art Cruickshank, and remembers his father's work on the film. "MGM called Disney," said Meador, "and I think what they said was 'Can we borrow your best effects man?' I think Walt presented this to him as a challenge. My father was probably the best effects man, animation-wise, in the industry."* In the days of PINOCCHIO and the early cartoon features, Meador's effects department employed up to sixty animators full-time. By the mid-fifties, when FORBIDDEN PLANET was in production, the volume of animation at the studio had decreased greatly and Meador's department was much smaller, employing at its busiest between ten and fifteen animators, and was at times inactive. Meador's chief assistant in the department, Dwight Carlisle, remembers that he and Meador visited MGM for meetings and screenings of the footage requiring their work. They took film to be worked-on back to their department at Disney where the needed effects would be animated and photographed.

*Meador recalls that Harper Goff at MGM originated the contact with Walt Disney for Meador's help. No one else interviewed about the film could remember Goff or knew about his connection with MGM or FORBIDDEN PLANET.

The most extensive effects animation to be completed involved the Id's night attack on the spaceship where its outline becomes visible in the ship's defensive force field. Although Irving Block had sold Nayfack on filming the original story by playing-up the potential for eerie suspense inherent in the concept of an invisible monster, it was always planned to make the Id visible eventually because, according to Block, "you can't tease an audience forever." The original screenplay also called for the Id to become visible at the film's climax as well, after it breaks through the Lab door.

CLOSE SHOT—MORBIUS

rising. TRUCK him IN toward the door. In the f. g. of the SHOT Adams' blaster accompanies him, *pointing steadily at the back of his skull.* Morbius stops, stands facing the door with his arms outspread.

MORBIUS

Stop! No further! I command you to go back!

Now between him and the shattered door a towering and bestial outline is swifty taking visble shape. As Adams' blaster is slowly lowered o. s.—

HIGH ANGLE—CLOSE SHOT—MORBIUS

arms still outspread, looking up into the CAMERA as though into the monster's face, and recognizing himself there with loathing.

CLOSE SHOT (PROCESS)—MORBIUS WITH HIS BACK TOWARD CAMERA, AND THE MONSTER TOWERING OVER HIM AS THEY FACE EACH OTHER AT LAST.

Simply the briefest flash of the thing as it stands now fully visible in all its hair and horror—the dull pig eyes, the small drooping ears, the vampire snout, the gaping jaws of nightmare. Then, as it sweeps Morbius into its embrace, sinks its claws—

TWO SHOT—ADAMS AND ALTA

forgetting even each other as they stare up insanely o. s. All at once, the bellowings gurgle off into silence. As Alta cries out, darts forward, PAN to Morbius slumping on the floor. He is dying, but physically unmarked—and the monster is gone for good.

Preliminary test animation for the Id sequence (top right) drawn by Disney effects animator Joshua Meador (far left), and the final composite effect as seen in the film (left). Final animation drawings for the sequence (bottom right) were done in conti crayon on white fine stock animation paper, rendered more sketchy and indistinct to suggest the Id's invisibility. After animation tests for each shot were found acceptable, Art Cruickshank photographed the actual paper drawings onto false sensitized duping stock No. 5245 in the Disney camera department to produce the high contrast burn-in elements and mattes used to produce the final composites. Different colored filters produced a full color effect from the black-and-white animation. Each element of the shot, such as laserblasts, was photographed separately onto its own piece of film. A "glow glass" was used in the photography, a heavy light diffusing device which added a soft edge on the drawing, creating the illusion that a hot energy field was making the creature visible. The optical department at MGM, headed by Irving Reis, did the final composite work.



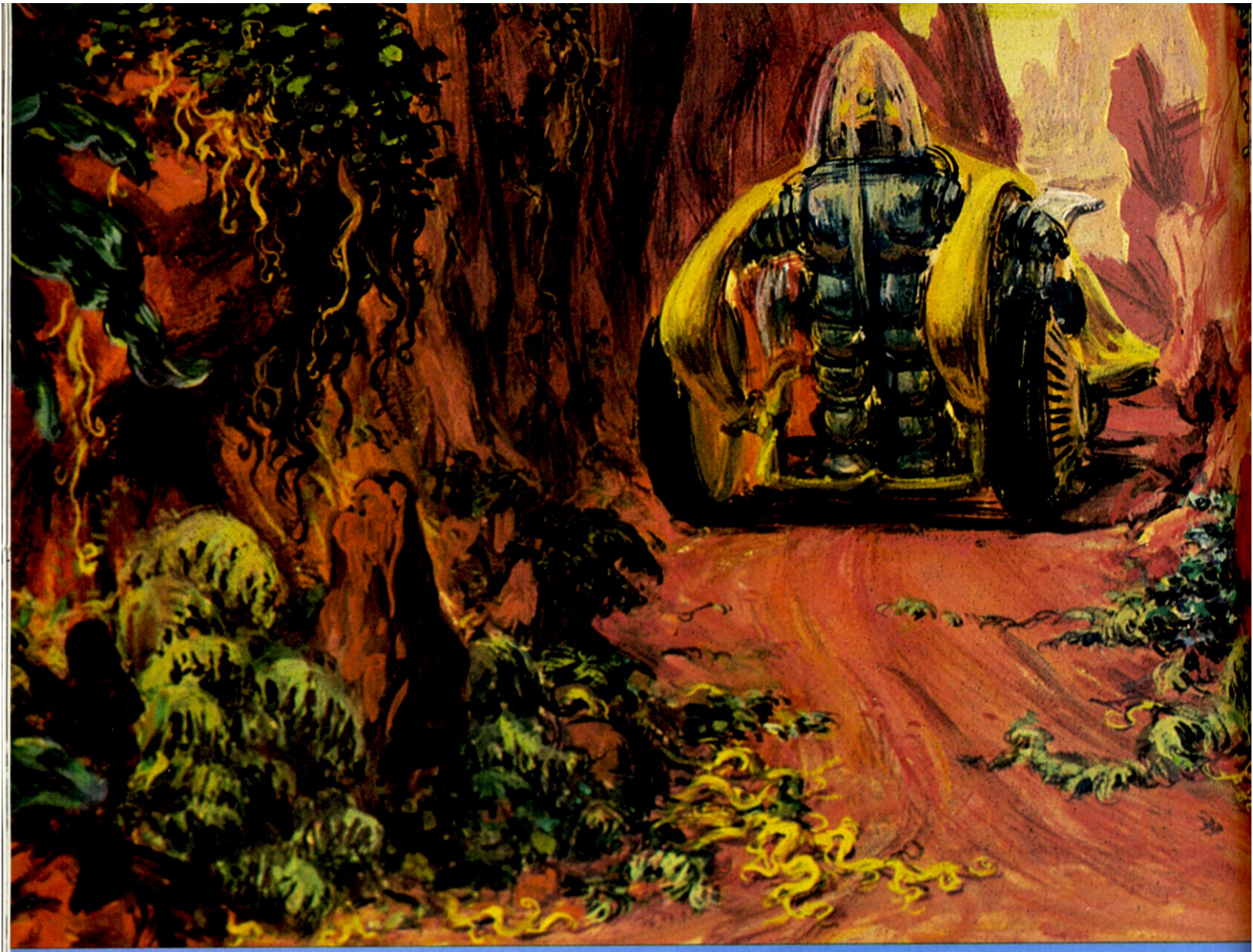


The sequence was filmed, almost as written, but the Id was never made visible, although its appearance at this point makes the scene much more dramatic and less confusing. Unfortunately, the screenplay provides no real explanation for its visibility, and it may have been omitted for that reason.

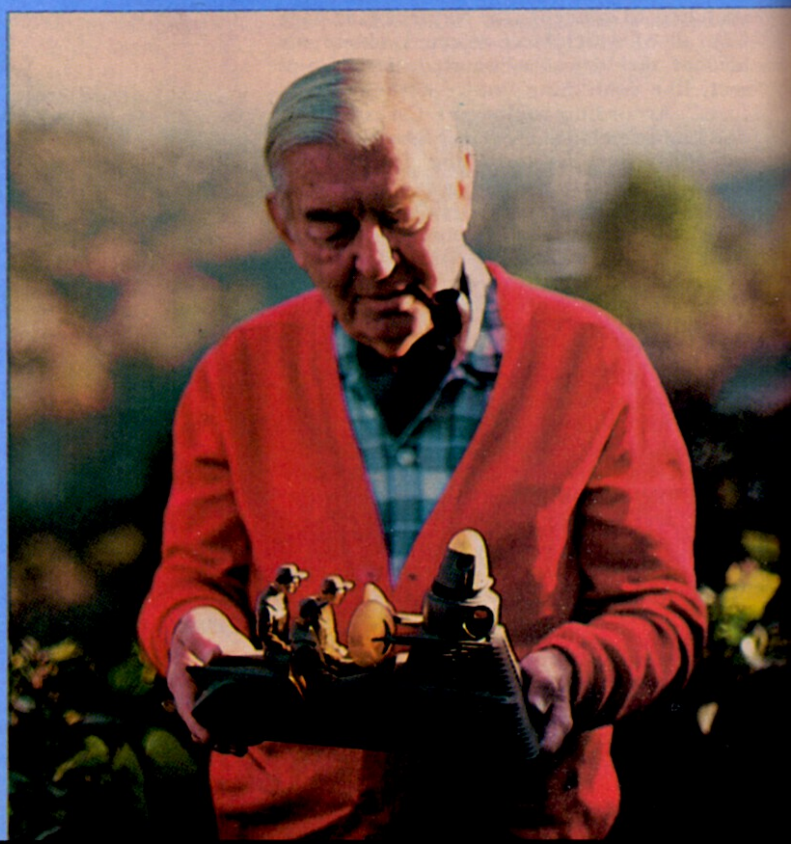
When Nayfack turned over the Id sequence to Meador, a visual concept for the monster had yet to be decided upon, beyond its brief description in the screenplay and sketchy characteristics established by some of the action and dialogue: that it was two-footed, bellowed and roared, and was a nightmare of adaptive evolution. Irving Block had made early concept sketches of the Id even before Nayfack had purchased the property. Block's concept of a bulky, creeping mass (see page 6) was meant to be a literal nightmare, the physical equivalent of the warped, primal urges of Morbius' subconscious mind from which the Id monster sprang. It wasn't what Nayfack wanted. Arthur Lonergan and production illustrator Mentor Huebner also sketched Id concepts for Nayfack (see page 32), all of which were rejected. Huebner's idea of the Id was a "bloated, horrible insect, like something you've never seen before." According to Dwight Carlisle, Meador hired freelance animator Ken Hultgren, someone outside both the Disney and MGM organizations, to get a fresh approach on the problem. Hultgren, whose only assignment was to come up with a workable Id concept, developed the image of a roaring beast's head with piercing eyes. Many of those who worked on the film laughingly suggest that it was patterned after MGM's Leo the Lion trademark, a fact that may have appealed to the humorous nature of producer Nayfack, who finally gave his approval.

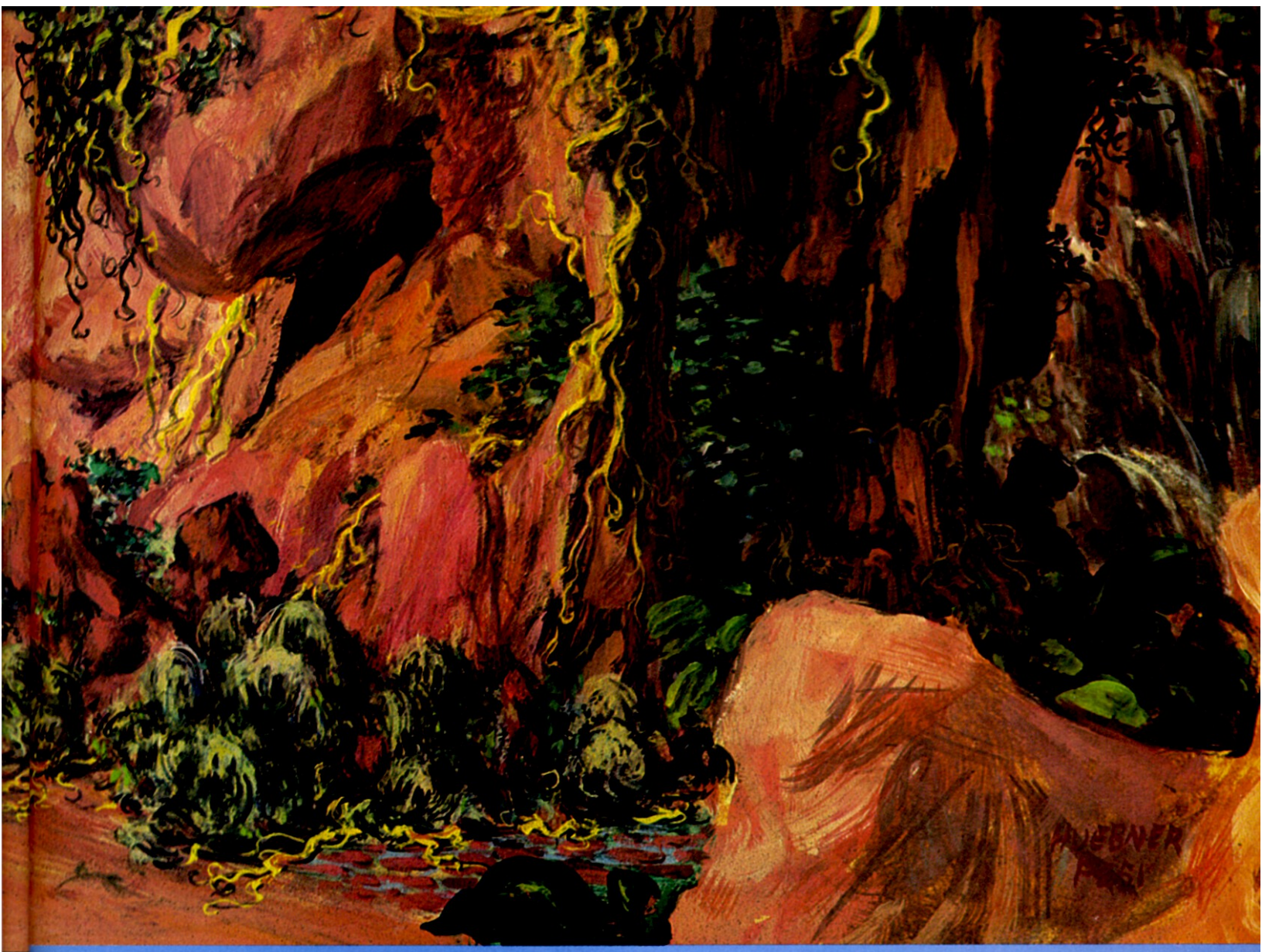
Meador did the main drawings for the sequence, called "extremes," which established the action called for in each shot. These were turned over to Carlisle who would assign one of four animators then at work in the department to prepare a series of drawings called "in-betweens," which would make the animation fluid. One of the in-betweeners working in the department at the time was Joe Alves, later to be production designer of JAWS and CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND. "It was a total fluke that I got to work on

continued on page 38





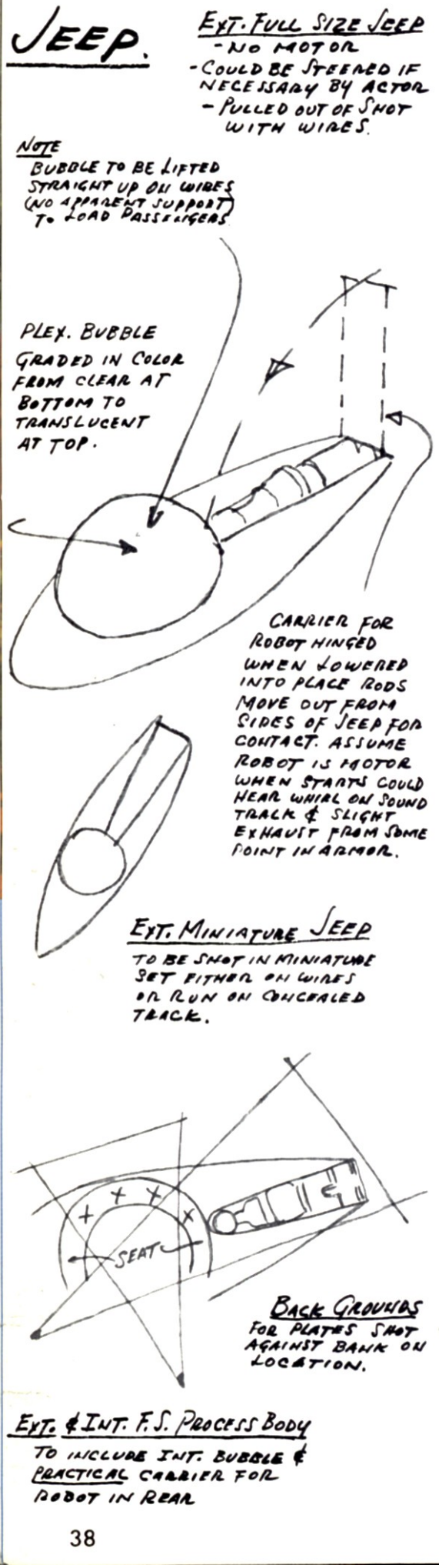






Top: An early preproduction sketch by Mentor Huebner of a rear view of Robby and his passing jeep as he transports Adams and his officers to the Morbius home, giving them a grand tour of the wonders of Altair IV. The jeep design reflects early ideas by art director Arthur Lonergan for an enclosed vehicle, somewhat more practical than Gillespie's final open design. Sadly, the sequence for the most part was abandoned after money for construction of exterior sets for the full-size jeep to drive through was denied because production costs had escalated way over budget. The sets included this view of a mountain pass, complete with lush vegetation, waterfall (upper right) and a pond with red lilly pads. Special effects supervisor "Buddy" Gillespie attempted a scaled-down version of the sequence by filming the jeep and actors in front of a process screen using rear projected shots and whip pans (far right) of the landscape miniature built on lot three, plus long shots of a miniature jeep (left) filmed on the same set. The quality of the process projection, a stop gap measure at best, didn't pass muster during previews of the film and the shots ended up on the cutting room floor. Gillespie, one of the pioneers of the MGM special effects department who supervised work on THE WIZARD OF OZ in 1938, posed with the jeep miniature in front of his California home in 1974 (middle left). He passed-away in 1977. Far Left: Adams (Leslie Nielsen) and Morbius (Walter Pidgeon) next to the full-size robot jeep designed by Gillespie and constructed by the prop shop.





FORBIDDEN PLANET," says Alves, who was only 18 years-old at the time, "I was too late to start in with Disney's training program, so they took me into another room where they sort of 'lost' me." The room was Meador's special effects department, and one of the in-betweeners at work on the Id sequence started handing Alves some of the work to do. "Meador made the main drawings very sketchy," remembered Alves. "The Id was drawn on animation paper with a conti crayon, providing a soft, indistinct line which gave the impression that the creature wasn't all there. After this was done, we would add 'hot spots' of color, some blue and some yellow, on additional cels for each frame." Alves remembers that Meador painted color sketches of the Id sequence with a pallette knife. "He was a great pallette painter."

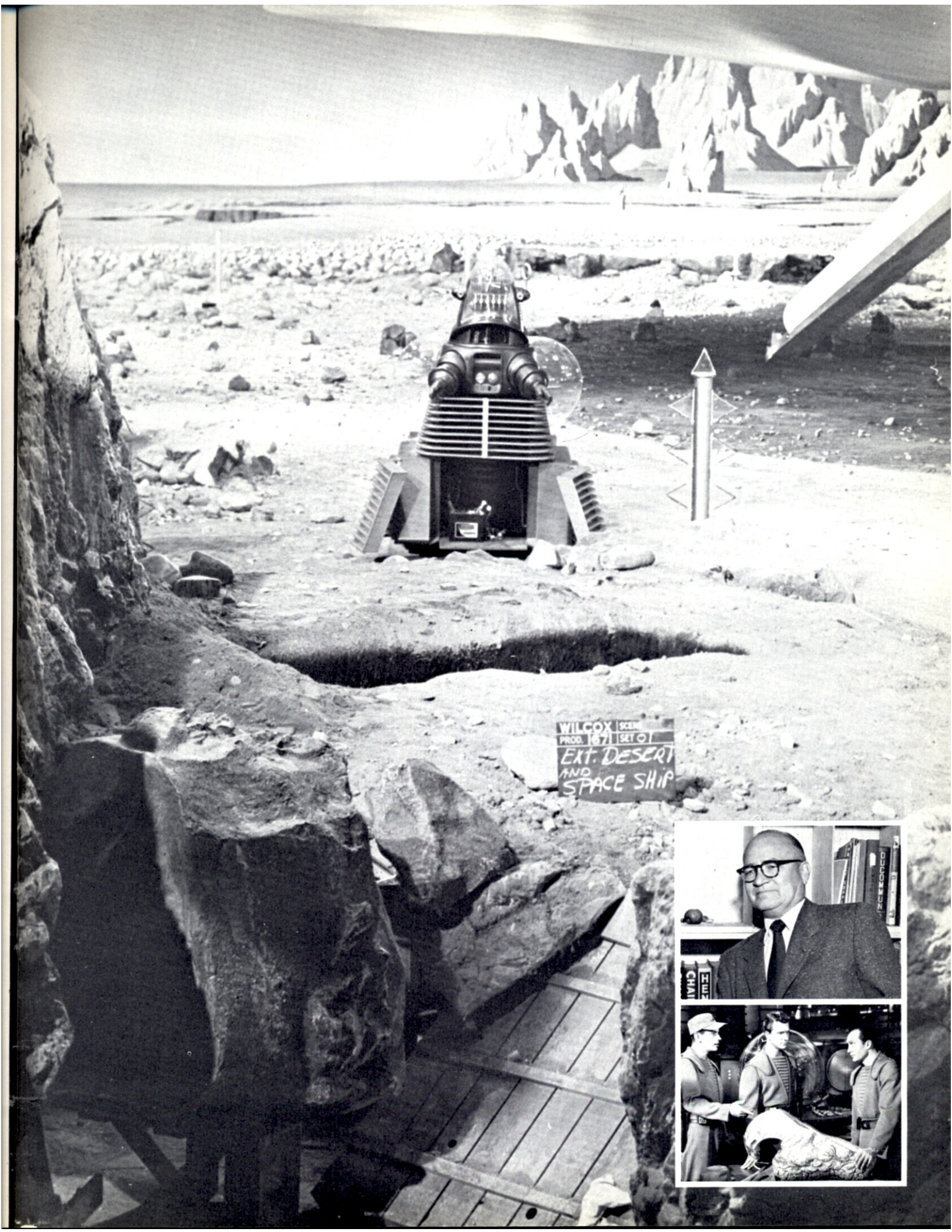
While the Id sequence is the most spectacular of Meador's contributions to the FORBIDDEN PLANET effects, his handiwork is seen in numerous shots throughout the picture, some of which are shown on pages 4, 14 and 57, often adding just the right final touch to make a sequence believable. Meador's animation supplied the blaster effects for the ship's main batteries and the crew's handweapons and sidearms. When Morbius throws a piece of fruit into his household disintegrator beam, Meador's animation vaporized it into nothingness, with the help of the MGM optical department which removed the image of the fruit from the shot at just the right moment via a split screen matte. Meador's animation effect when Robby disintegrates the *althaea frutex* in Morbius' garden was handled the same way. A locked-off camera had filmed the scene both with the garden plant in place and removed from the shot. A split screen matte combines the footage to remove it from the scene to coincide with Meador's animation blast and vaporization effect. Robby "short circuits" twice in the film, and for this effect Meador animated white electrical flashes within the robot's head dome and blue arcs of electricity jumping from his rotating rings. Meador also animated the beams emanating from Robby's weapons neutralizers, flashing blue lights mounted on each side of the robot's head dome. In one scene Robby dispenses with a pesky monkey about to steal some fruit by whisking him off the table with one of his arsenal of harmless defensive beams. The Meador animation for this shot is much more extensive than that seen in the film, with Robby blasting the little crittur several times before it gives up its quest. Most of the effect ended up on the cutting room floor when audiences misconstrued the scene during the film's previewing stage. For the Krell ventilation shaft, Meador animated two electrical discharge effects, the first rotoscoped to conform to the changing perspective of the camera panning the miniature. No simple electric arcs, Meador's animation intertwined snaking electrical bursts of blue and yellow along the shaft's length which greatly enhanced the realism of the shot and distracted the attention of the audience away from the fact that they were only seeing a small miniature. Occasionally Meador's work came to the rescue of effects which were designed to work live during principal photography. For the shot where the Bosun tosses an object to test the force

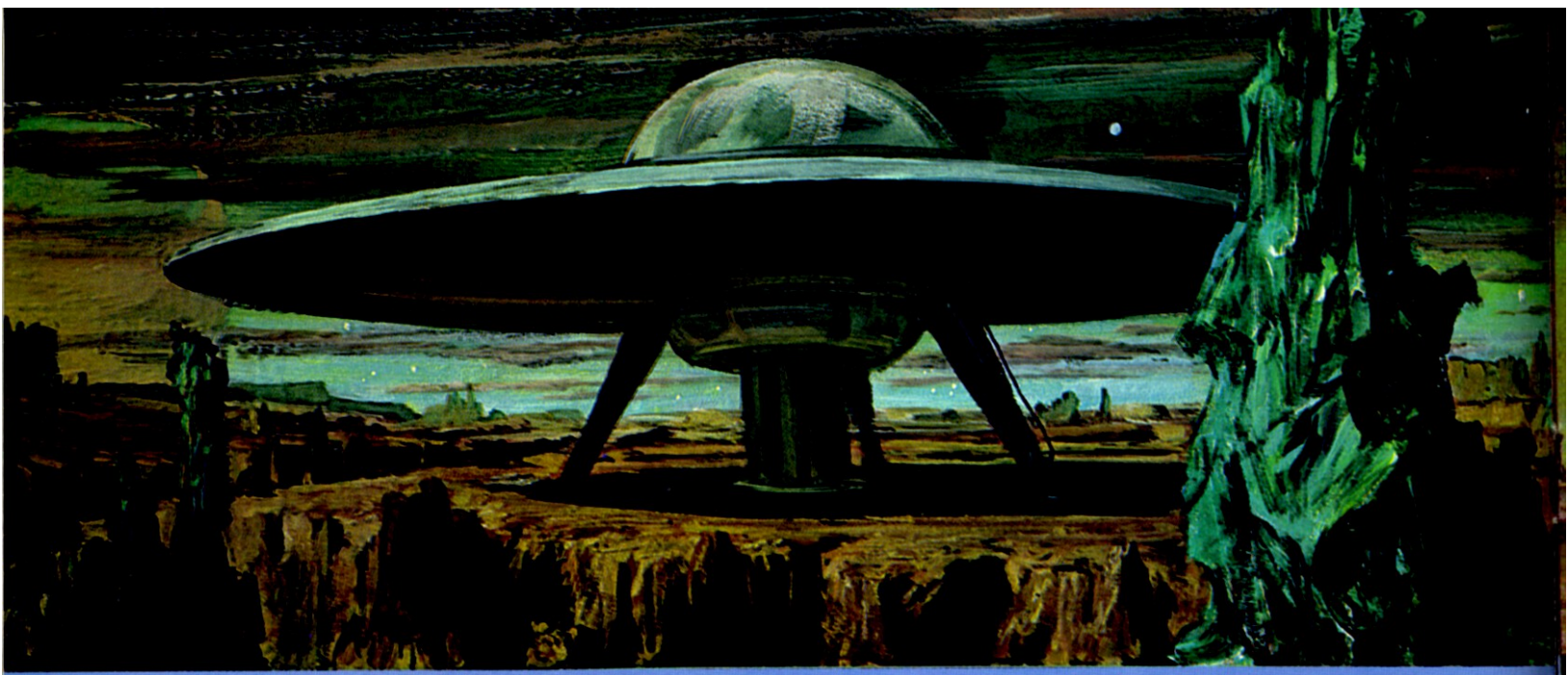
Right: An inside view of Robby's jeep on the Ext. Desert and Space Ship set, showing the battery which powered Robby's head dome and chest effects panel, and the old 12 volt Dodge combination starter motor and generator which ran the jeep. "Buddy" Gillespie designed the jeep to run only with Robby's head and upper torso in place, sans operator. Cuts of the robot entering and exiting the jeep were filmed separately. The jeep was equipped with only two seats (Ostrow had to ride on top of the rear body!), with one of the actors controlling the starter, brake and steering mechanisms, ostensibly being operated by the robot. Effects man Bob MacDonald, who worked putting together the fiberglass body and custom chassis, remembers driving it around the MGM lot after construction. Left: Art director Arthur Lonergan's sketches of an early concept for an enclosed bubble-jeep, more practical for traveling at high speeds in the dusty Altairian desert, and capable of carrying more passengers. Inset Right: Jack Gaylord, MGM's prop shop supervisor, now 82 and retired in San Diego. Gaylord's crew rigged the Id footprints on the spaceship set to indicate the presence of the invisible Id the first night it attacks the ship. A mock-up of the Id's foot was made first, a prop to be used in a later scene where Farman, Adams and Ostrow discuss the nature of the ship's intruder based on a casting of its footprint (inset bottom right). The prop shop actually reversed the process, using the prop foot to make the plaster-of-paris footprints which were set into the floor of the saucer set which had been platformed for this purpose (see lower left). The imprints were filled with about three inches of dirt and rigged with a gate at the bottom to open in sequence and create the illusion of the footprints advancing one by one.

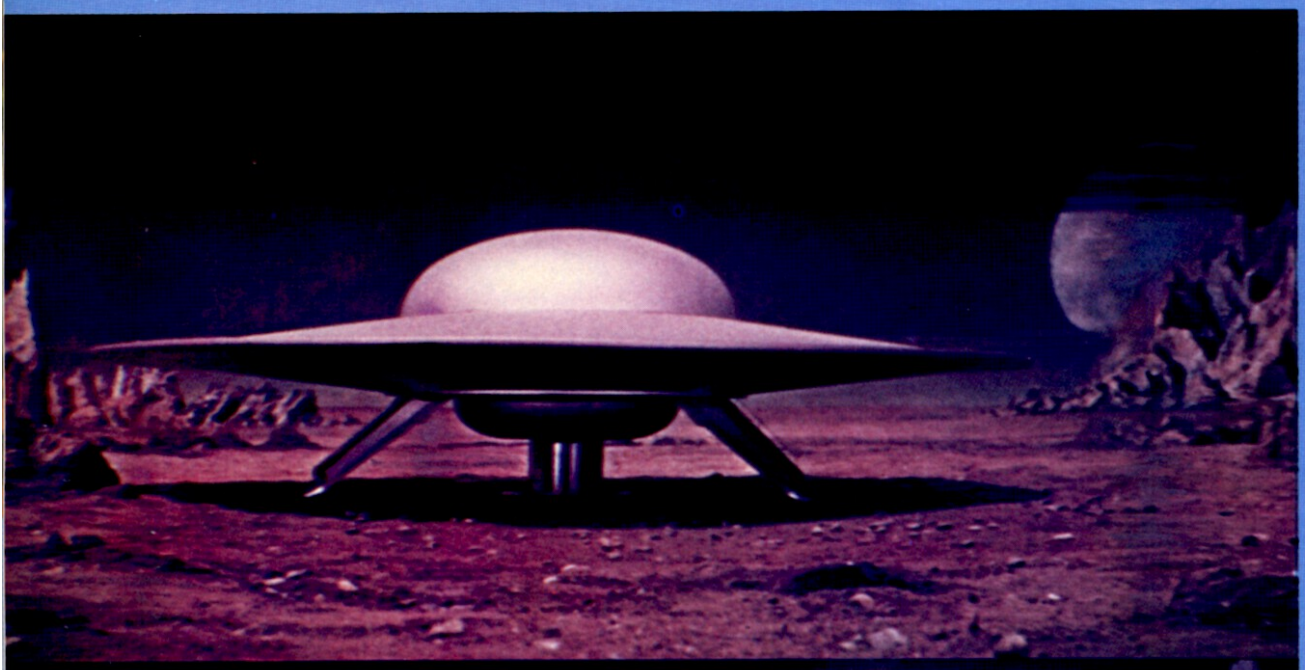
field of the energy fence erected to protect the ship, a live explosion effect was used, but was replaced later with Meador's animation, one of the last effects turned in by the Disney group.

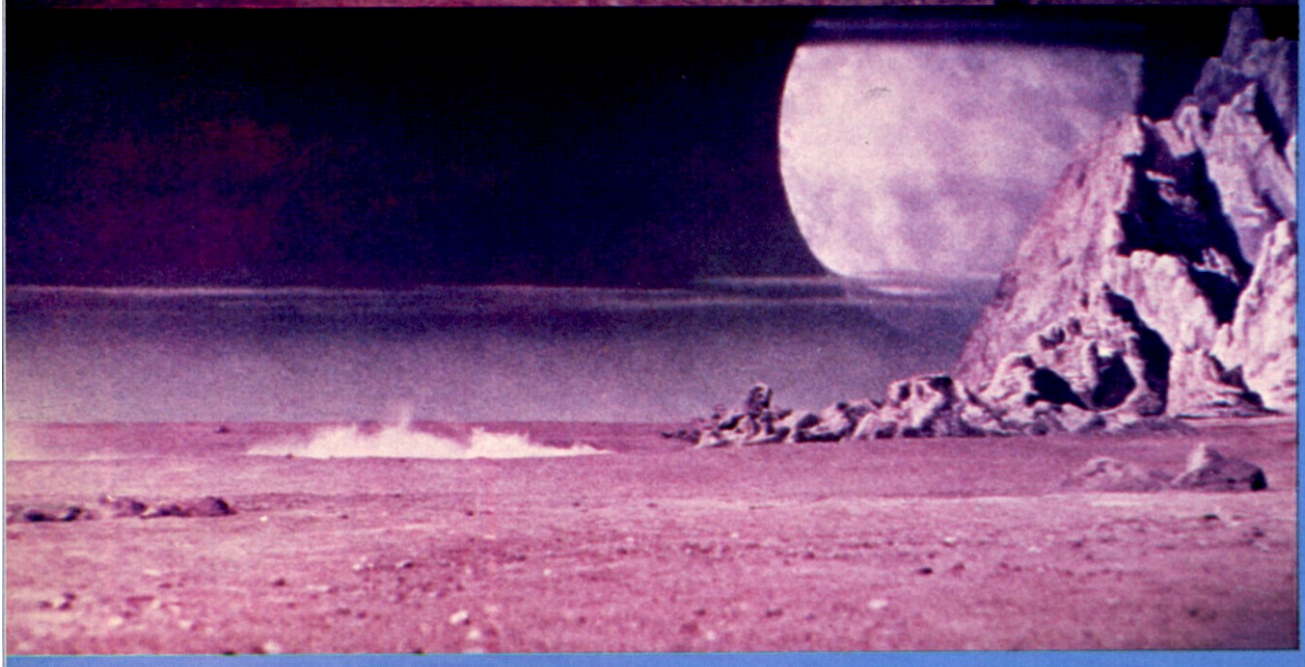
One of Meador's most challenging assignments was to animate the blaster disintegration of a tiger in mid-air leap. "Let's say the jump took only one second," explained Meador artist Joe Alves. "That would be twenty-four frames of film. Normally this would mean we'd need twenty-four drawings, but we were able to take the real tiger up to a certain point and then animate the rest. We animated a halo effect which encompassed the outline of the tiger as it disintegrated." The image of the tiger, which was filmed separately from the actors using a locked-off camera, was optically removed from the scene using a split screen matte, leaving only Meador's animated halo effect which faded out quickly, completing the illusion that the beam from Commander Adams' blaster had vaporized the beast into a fading energized trail of constituent atoms. In the original script, the tiger disintegration is handled off-screen, calling for no special effect at all. In fact, most of the Meador effects are not mentioned in the script, and were not part of the film's original budget estimates. The extensive use of animation was devised later by "Buddy" Gillespie and Arthur Lonergan when they designed the film's special effects sequences during preproduction. During postproduction, the actual work on the FORBIDDEN PLANET animation took Meador and his group more than six months to complete. "Disney was very expensive to contract out," Alves pointed out, and the protracted and costly animation work further escalated the budget of FORBIDDEN PLANET into the multi-million dollar category. The great expense and long delays may have been a fac-

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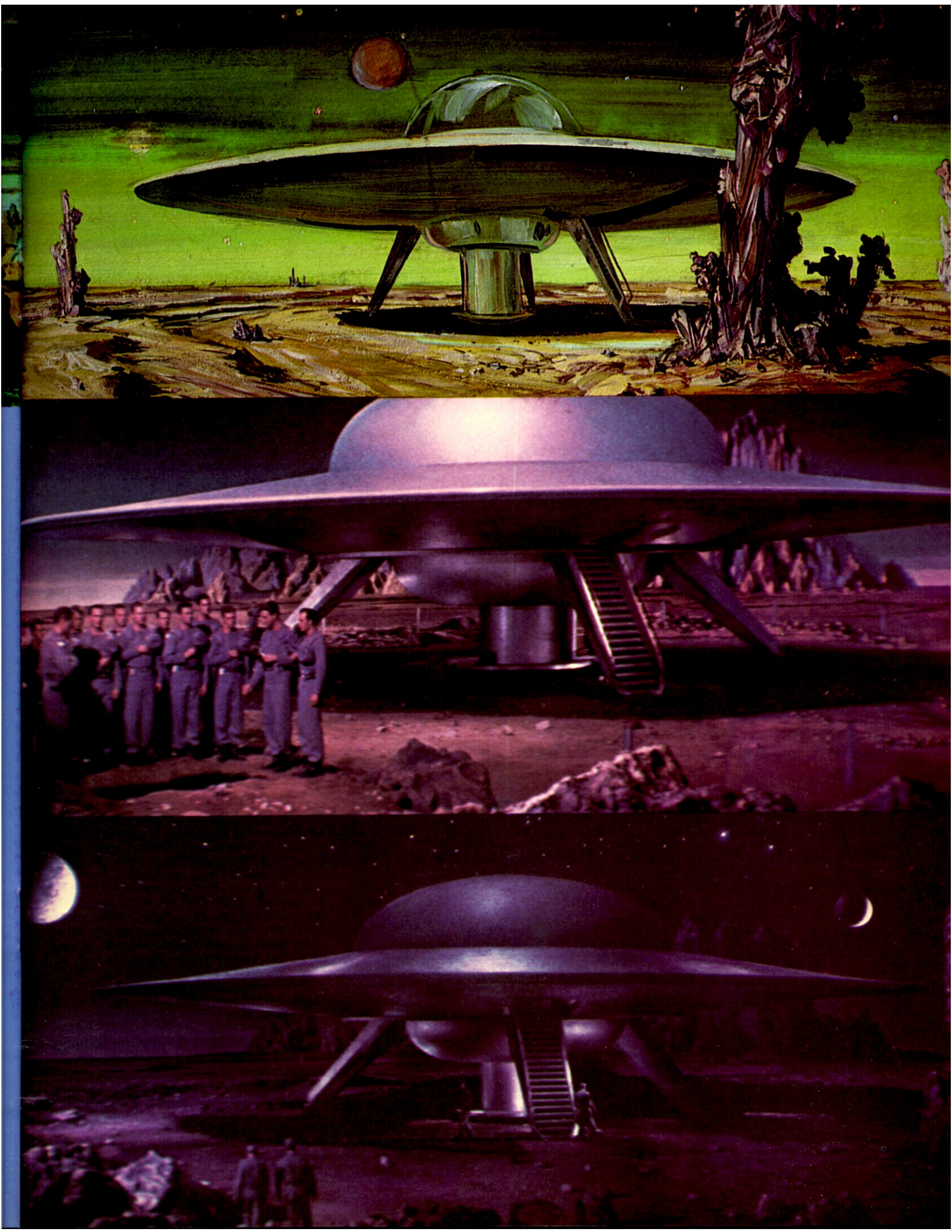

WILCOX
PROD. 67
DSCN
SET
EXT. DESERT
AND
SPACE SHIP







Top: Early preproduction concepts of United Planets Cruiser C-57D by Mentor Huebner. As production illustrator, Huebner did numerous 8x21" water color sketches like the above to experiment with various ideas for the color scheme and geography of Altair IV. A production illustrator since 1952, FORBIDDEN PLANET was Huebner's first science fiction fillm. Since, he has done storyboards and design illustrations for THE GREAT RACE, KING KONG, METEOR and is now working on the preproduction of Dino De Laurentiis' FLASH GORDON. He served as background artist for Ralph Bakshi on LORD OF THE RINGS and was instrumental in developing the graphic process which made production of the film economical. Huebner storyboarded all of the action and special effects sequences of FORBIDDEN PLANET, but like most production illustrators got no credit on the film. Middle and Bottom Right: Two matte paintings of the ship by Henri Hillinck. A precise line-up was made by projecting frames of the live-action element onto matte boards. The top and right-hand portions of the saucer not part of the 3/4 view constructed on stage 15 were painted-in and the sky, mountains and rock formations were matched to portions visible on the set and cyclorama. For the night scene, stars were tiny holes drilled in black board registered to the painting, lit from behind, and double exposed. Left: The huge outdoor miniature set of Altair IV built on lot three, used for the landing scenes (6' model, top) and shots of Robby's jeep (bottom).





tor in eliminating the Id's final appearance at the end of the film. "Disney was not the easiest company to work with," said Alves. "They were really only interested in their own work, and after we started on FORBIDDEN PLANET, they went into production on SLEEPING BEAUTY which immediately made a lot of demands on the special effects animation department. The MGM work may have become too diffcult. I can only speculate, but any break would probably have come from the Disney side." Ironically, artist Joe Alves left Disney to work for John P. Fulton at Paramount on the animation effects for THE TEN COMMANDMENTS, the film that won the Oscar for the best special effects of 1956, beating-out FORBIDDEN PLANET, the only other nominee.

While Joshua Meador finished work on the film's animation, Warren Newcombe's matte shot department completed work on matte paintings and artwork needed to complete several sequences. Newcombe and department matte painters Henri Hillinck and Howard Fisher are deceased. Matthew Yuricich, who was an assistant in the Newcombe department at this time, is now one of Hollywood's foremost matte artists whose work has enhanced PLANET OF THE APES, SOYLENT GREEN, LOGAN'S RUN and CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND. Yuricich interrupted his work on the matte paintings to be used in the forthcoming STAR TREK feature to discuss the work of the MGM matte department on FORBIDDEN PLANET. Five matte paintings were completed for the film, done in oil paint on masonite board. Henri Hillinck completed four of them, two shots of Space Cruiser C-57D for compositing with foreground live action, a long shot of the Morbius House of Tomorrow and a long shot of the graveyard where the survivors of the Bellerephon expedition were buried (see photos pages 41 and 53). Howard Fisher worked on the largest and most complex of the matte paintings, the Krell furnace, which included a camera move supplied by the optical department (see photo page 59). Supervisor Warren Newcombe "never touched a brush," according to Irving Block. "He was my friend and I worked for him, but Warren Newcombe never did anything. He sat in his office and played around with his shortwave radio calling his friends to play chess." Block wasn't employed in the matte department at the time, but Yuricich confirms that Newcombe did none of the actual painting. "He and Buddy [Gillespie] fought all the time," Yuricich added, referring to attempts by each to control the special effects work on the picture. Newcombe's department had its own editor, Ben Fugelsby, and effects cameramen, Marc Davis and assistant Dick Worsfield, who would be present on a set whenever elements for matte shots were being filmed. Added Yuricich, "In those days the department heads each had their own little kingdom."

While producer Nicholas Nayfack oversaw final touches being added to complete the film's special effects, supplied by the Newcombe department and the Disney animators, studio chief Dore Schary hired Louis and Bebe Barron in October to create electronic music for the film. The vivid "electronic tonalities" created by the Barrons for FORBIDDEN PLANET represent one of the great revolutions in film scoring. It is to Schary's credit as an innovator that he saw the value of their work and assumed the commercial risk to use it. Says Schary, "I loved the idea of being a little bit ahead of the times."

Between 1949 and 1953, the Barrons produced electronic music for a series of experimental films. One of their early compositions was used in a film based on the writings of Anais Nin called THE BELLS OF ATLANTIS. Impressed by the compliments they were receiving from fellow musicians, the Barrons wanted to enter the motion picture business, hoping a contract could net them a few thousand dollars for their work. Through the grapevine they discovered that MGM's Dore Schary was the man to see. Says Barron, "He was the number one guy in the industry, so we decided we might as well shoot for the moon. Besides, we also heard he was a nice human being." From a friend they learned that Schary's wife was a painter and that she was having a one-woman show at a New York gallery. Living in Greenwich Village at the time, the two musicians decided to crash the showing in the hope that Dore would be there for the opening.

Says Barron proudly: "We crashed the show's opening alright. There were all these terribly impressive people standing around, everybody feeling really important, so we looked around for the person who would probably look the least important. We spotted him and sure enough it was Schary. Now we knew that Schary had personally produced a film called BAD DAY AT BLACK ROCK. It was a controversial film at the time and the critics were wild about it. We told Schary we liked it and he appeared to be pleased. After all, everybody likes to be appreciated, but we really meant it. We were quite lucky that we had something to latch onto for openers."

After establishing this "in," the Barrons told Schary about their musical discoveries. Interested, Schary gave them a standing invitation to come to MGM when they were on the west coast. Impulsively, they immediately decided to drive cross-country and stay with Bebe's parents who lived in Los Angeles. Barely two weeks later they were on the phone to Schary, who agreed to see them that same afternoon. "I was absolutely stunned," says Schary today, "but I got a big kick out of those two kids. Their persistence was just marvelous."

The Barrons had prepared some tapes, a record and had also brought along some film clips from THE BELLS OF ATLANTIS. Politely refusing the films, Schary preferred to listen to the tapes, visualizing in his mind footage from FORBIDDEN PLANET. Schary was impressed and hired the two New York musicians to score a portion of MGM's new science fiction film. Twenty-four hours later the Barrons received word that Schary had given interdepartmental orders to the effect that everything possible was to be done to assist them in their efforts.

The Barrons were introduced to Johnny Green and the MGM music department, and met all the studio staff composers at Green's house one evening where their experimental tapes were played and it was explained that the new music was to be featured in FORBIDDEN PLANET. It was a debut filled with enthusiasm, for the elctronic music received the approval of the entire gathering who realized its potential for use with the MGM science fiction feature. With the studio now in complete agreement, Schary invited the Barrons to transfer their equipment west and begin working on the score. "This was impossible," says Barron. "It would have been ridiculous to transfer all our equipment to Hollywood for a three-month job. We were happy in the Village and we naturally refused Schary's offer." Fortunately, their electronic music was now much desired for

Top Right: Leslie Nielsen models Walter Plunkett's costume design for a tropical uniform, never used, perhaps because it made the ship's crew look like boy scouts. Bottom Right: The wedding scene, edited out of the film, which was to follow the scene shown at the bottom of page 29. Far Left: Pennsylvania collector Wes Shank holds the original 20" diameter saucer miniature used to film the ship as it banks-in for a landing on Altair IV (near left). Floyd Parrish worked in Jack Gaylord's prop shop on the construction of three saucer miniatures for the film, the one shown, one 44" in diameter, and one 88" in diameter. The largest model was equipped with fully functional descending stairways and landing bumper, and now resides inoperable at Automobile-o-Rama, a car museum in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Max Gebinger rigged the large saucer with rotating red neon tubing inside its clear plastic underdome. The neon required so much voltage that electricity would arc onto the metallic paint covering the model (from the wires carrying power to the ship), requiring frequent retouching during the filming. The smaller saucers featured an inner plastic dome marked with black lines rotating inside the clear plastic underdome, lit from within by a red gel. The saucer's top dome was formed from brass. Prop shop supervisor Jack Gaylord estimates the cost of the three miniatures at about $20,000.

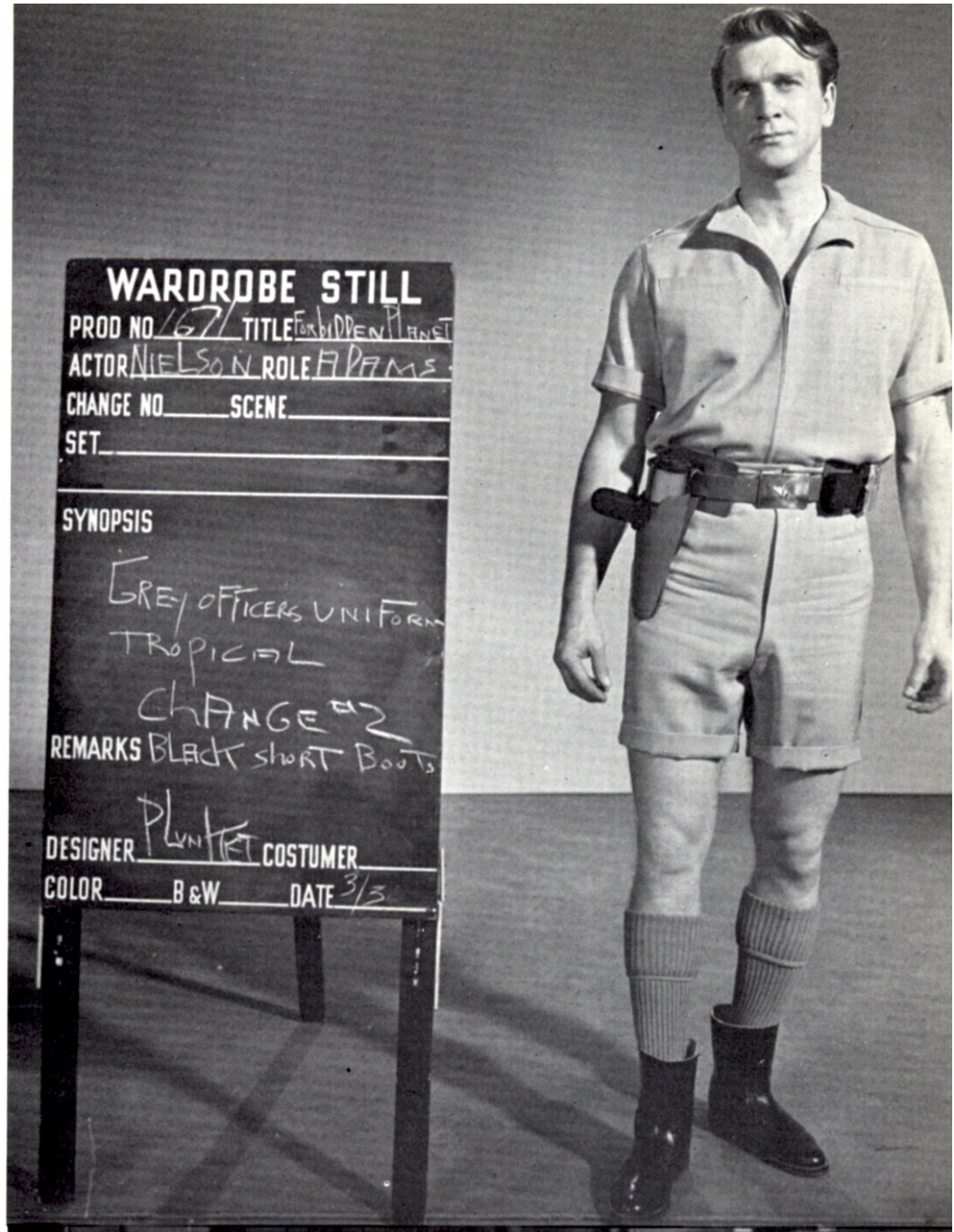
the film and MGM agreed to let them construct their musical composition in New York, the first time the studio had ever contracted for a musical score outside of Hollywood.

With what Lou Barron refers to as a beautiful contract, the two musicians returned to their Greenwich Village studio to begin work. When the contract was completed it was agreed that the new electronic music would provide only a portion of the film's soundtrack. If MGM used absolutely nothing of their score, they would receive $5000. If as little as three seconds were used, they could expect a minimum of $10,000. Beyond that, earnings were to be determined on a per screen minute basis. The twenty-five minute score for the film would eventually net the two musicians $25,000. "They really got a deal," recalls Barron. "We did all the recording and editing ourselves. We brought them a complete soundtrack."

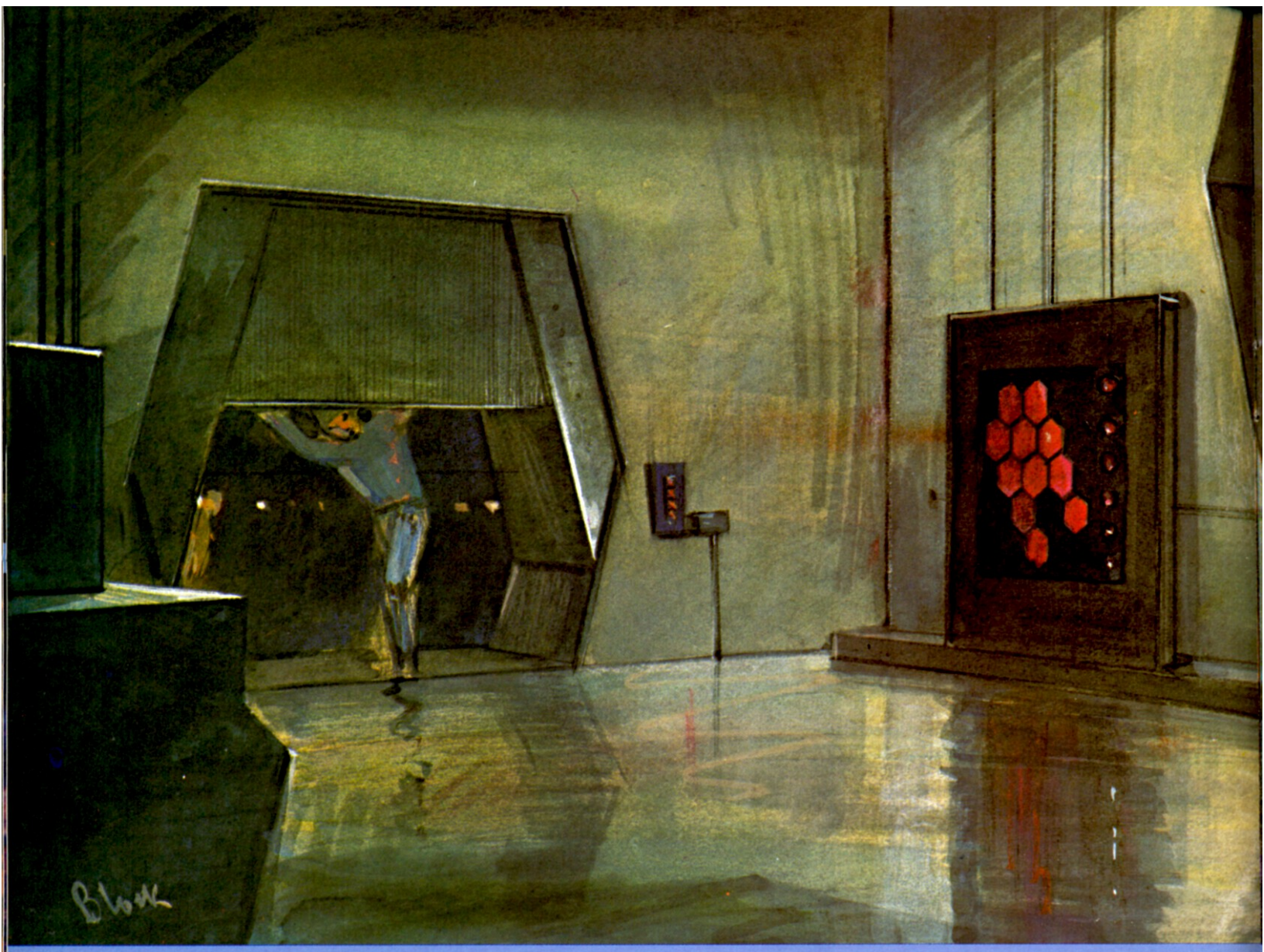
The score for FORBIDDEN PLANET represents a great many circuits designed by the Barrons. These interesting compositions ranged from the hesitating "beta beat" of the Id monster, to the bubbly sounds associated with Robby the Robot. Many of the sounds that reached the screen were collages of different circuits taped by the Barrons and stacked like building blocks—the same principle on which the moog synthesizer now works. Some of these themes involved as many as seven different component sounds, each representing a separate circuit. "From the beginning, we discovered that people compared them with sounds they heard in their dreams," says Barron. "When our circuits reached the end of their existence (an overload point) they would climax in an orgasm of power, and die. In the film, many of the sounds seem like the last paroxysm of a living creature." Some of these circuits were nameless, but a few were derived from some of their favorite music. The theme used as night fell on Altair IV came from a song called *Night With Two Moons.*

By January, 1956, the score was finished. With Scary's approval, the electronic score was to be used throughout the en-

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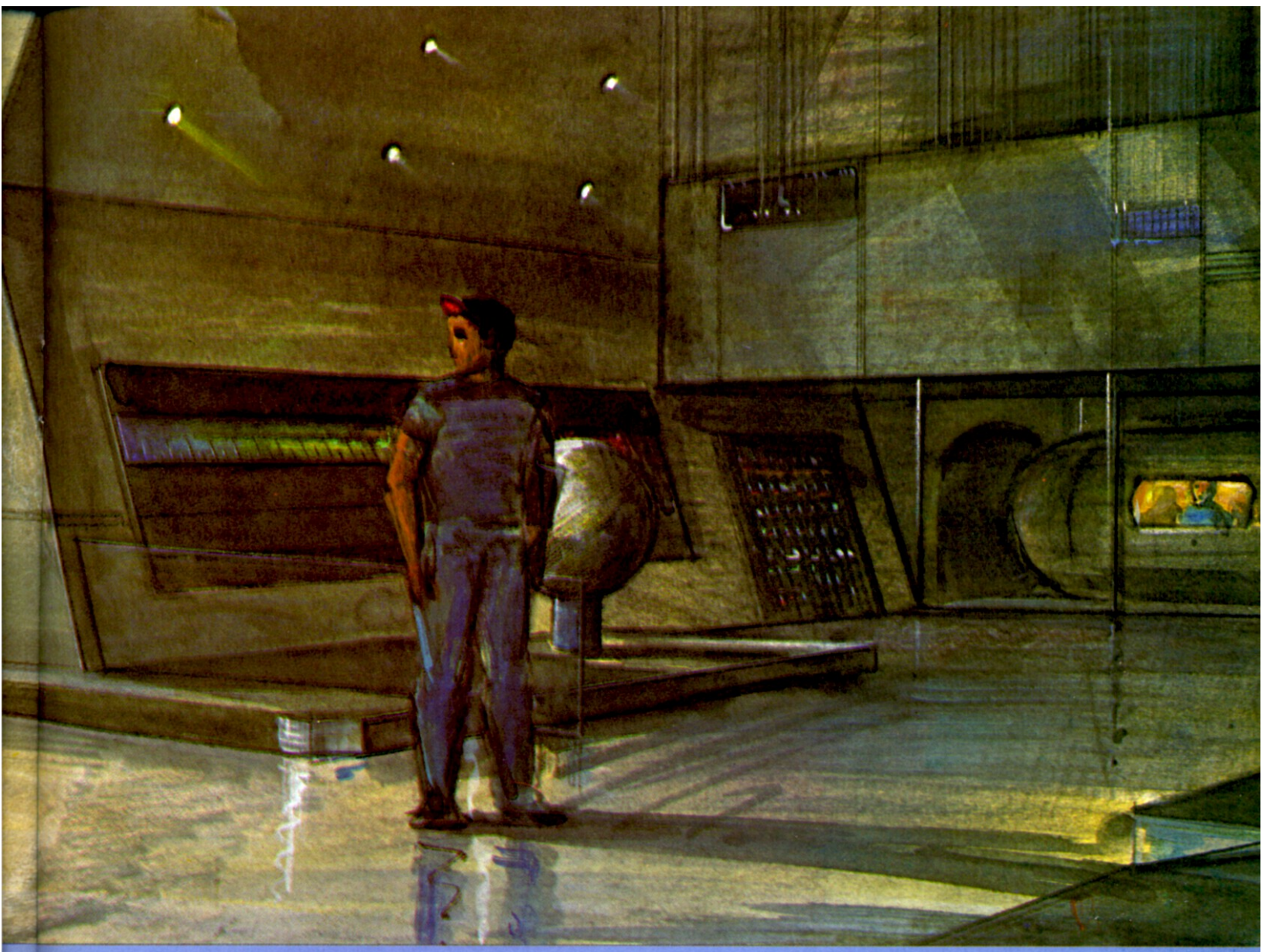








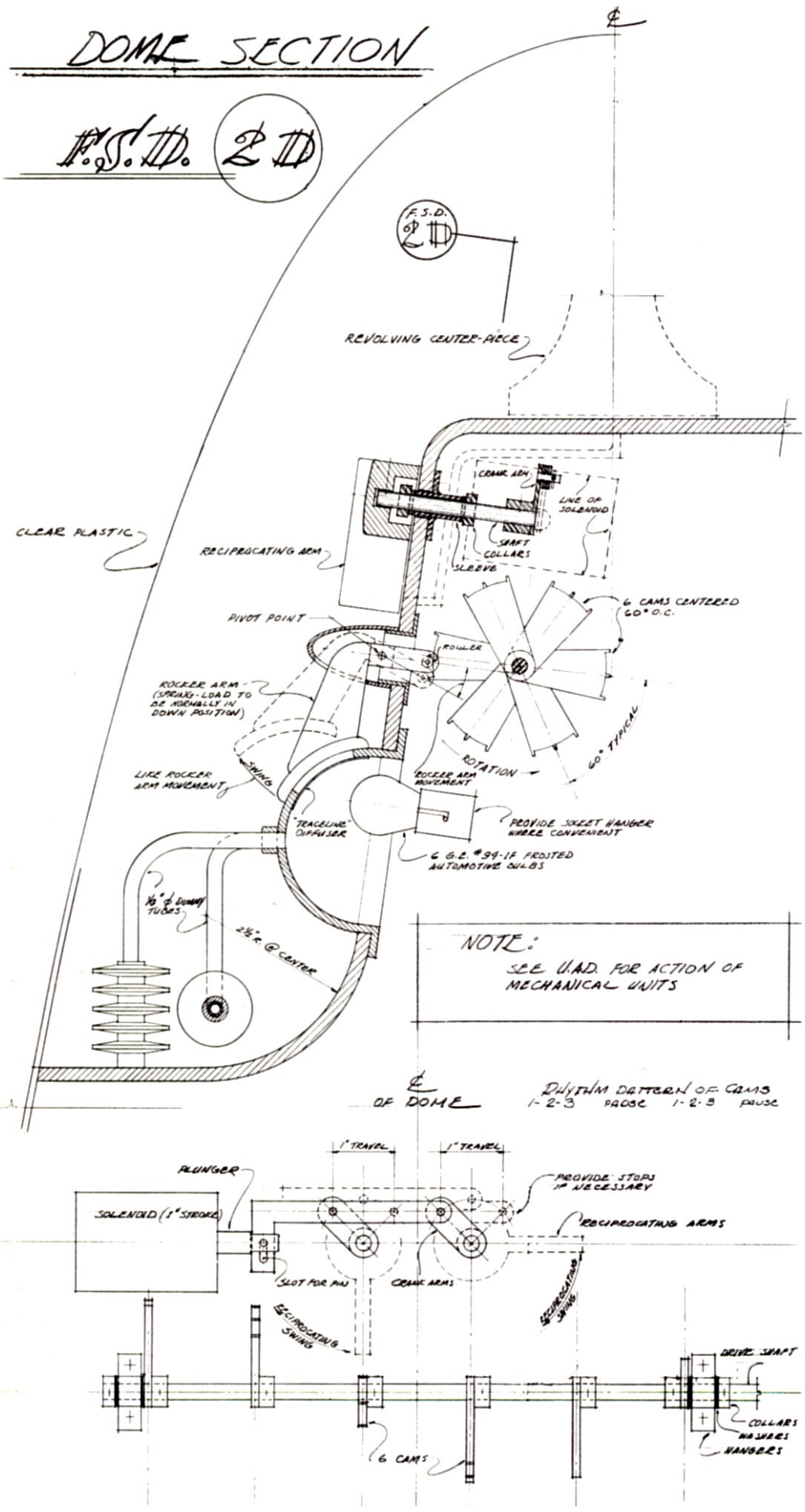

WARDROBE STILL
PROD NO 9921-05 TITLE FORBIDDEN PLANET
ACTOR ANNE FRANCIS ROLE ALTA
CHANGE NO. 7A SCENE 107
SET INT MORBIUS LIV. RM.
ALSO FOR TAG
SYNOPSIS
REMARKS
DESIGNER M. ROSE COSTUMER TOMMY
COLOR X B & W DATE 3-25-54





Top: Irving Block painted this early concept of the Krell laboratory in mid-1954, shortly after MGM bought his original story. The 8x21" water color sketch shows that Block's early ideas greatly influenced the film's eventual production design in sets, costumes and special effects. The layout of the actual laboratory set (top right) closely parallels Block's design, and the shape of the Krell door is virtually identical. The images used to represent the interior of the Krell furnace (bottom right), matte shot effects added by the Newcombe department, show a striking similarity to the visual light display in the Block laboratory sketch. Left: Two costumes designed by Helen Rose for Altaira (Anne Francis) which were not used in the film. Near Left: Rose considered this her best design. During the '30's, she had done costumes for the Franchon and Marco stage shows appearing in some of the larger movie theatres. For a number called "Living Statues" she sprayed dancers with gold paint. This gave her the idea, some twenty years later, for the futuristic look of "sprayed-on clothes" for Anne Francis, a form-fitting jump suit of silver lame, to be worn under a see-through plastic coat. According to Francis, use of the costume was nixed by Dore Shary for being too revealing! The outfit was to be worn in the "tag" wedding scene, edited out of the film. (The date on the wardrobe slate should be 3/25/55, not '54.) Far Left: An alternate design for the jewel-encrusted outfit Altaira makes with the help of Robby to satisfy Adams' demand for less revealing outfits.





Right: The 1½" scale plan and elevations for Robby the Robot, drawn by draftsman Bob Kinoshita. This master plan for building Robby refers to twelve additional F.S.D. (full scale drawing) sheets. Not listed are F.S.D. 2D, shown left, Kinoshita's design for the operation of the head dome mechanisms, and F.S.D. 8A,B,C, and D, which detail a variety of hand attachments, including a beverage dispenser, pliers, and a cigar lighter. Only the pliers were ever used, in the scene where Robby pilots the ship at the end of the film. The three digit rubber hand used most of the time, featuring an opposable thumb, was developed in the prop shop during construction. Plastic shutters on canvas backing, like the cover of a rolltop desk, were to facilitate the movement of Robby's legs at the back of the knee and at the front and back of the pelvis where the legs joined the body. The concept was abandoned at the pelvis during construction and a single piece of sliding plastic was used instead, but the prop shop cut the aperture for the leg join too high in the front and a piece of plastic not part of the original design had to be added to cover the gaping holes. Ventilating fins (indicated by "see sht 3" at right) were to be glued onto the head dome to mask the placement of holes for air circulation, but the holes were never drilled for fear they would show up on certain camera angles, making Robby a suffocating environment for his operator. (Technical assistance by Greg Feret)

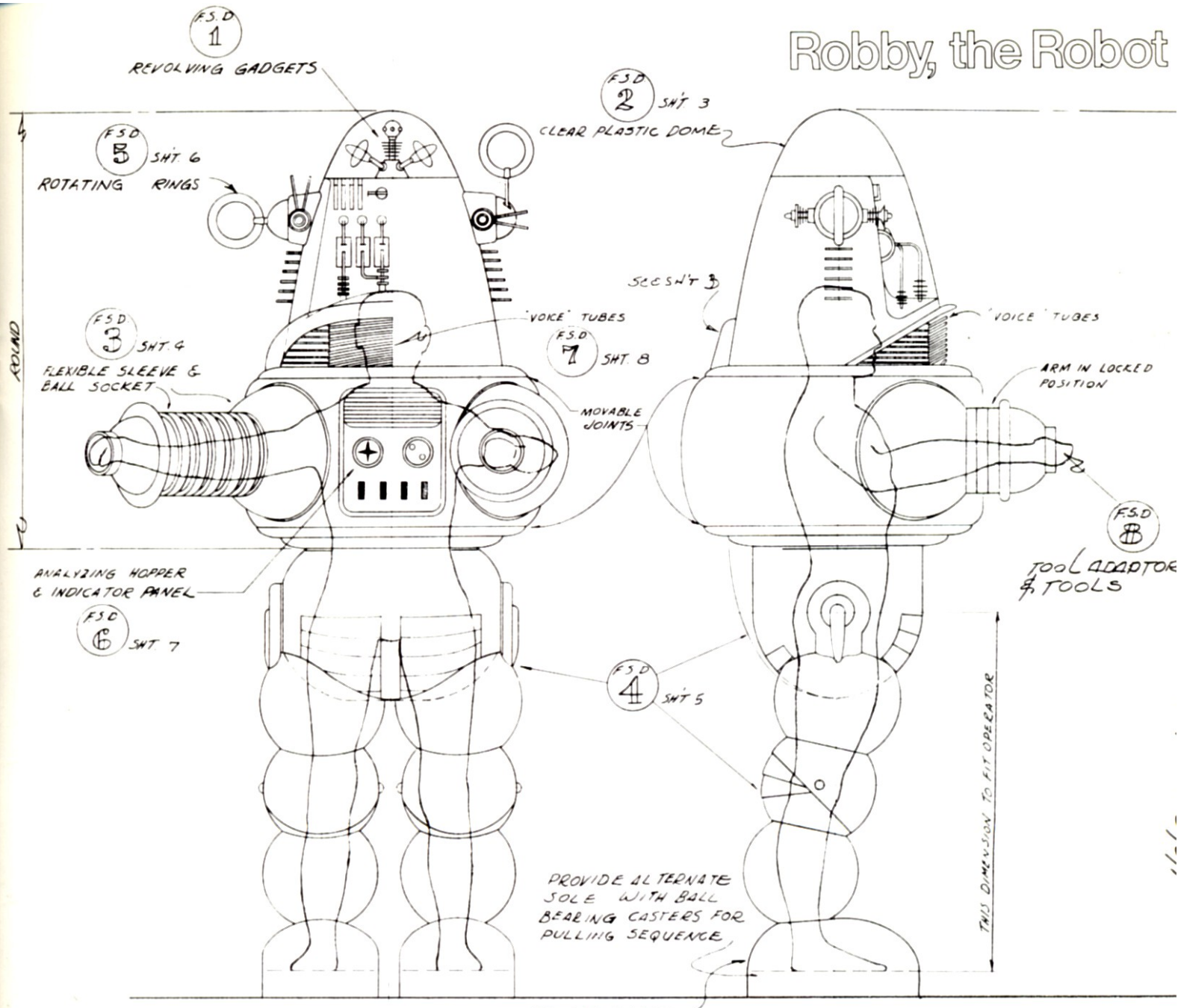
tire picture, eliminating a time consuming quest for additional orchestrated material. For the next six weeks, the Barrons would supervise the integration and mixing of their music onto the soundtrack of FORBIDDEN PLANET. Before the final dubbing session, the raw tapes were taken to a preview. In the middle of the theatre a sound technician worked a tape recorder which had been synchronized with the projector. As the film progressed, the technician would adjust the volume, treble, bass and balance controls, testing the range of the innovative new sounds. During the early scenes where the starship lands on Altair IV the mixer opened the volume controls and the eerie sounds poured out of the giant theatre speakers. The audience erupted in spontaneous applause. Composers have frequently been appalled by the quality of their scores once they are transferred to tape, comparing mixing to spreading peanut butter with a knife. But Louis and Bebe Barron were quite pleased that night.

A final problem did arise over screen credit for the musical contribution of the Barrons. In the original contractual agreement the credit was to have read "electronic music by Louis and Bebe Barron." Prior to the film's release, however, contract lawyer Rudy Monte circulated a memo among the MGM executives which read: "Do you suppose that perhaps the musicians union will say that they have jurisdiction over this if we call it electronic music?" This new anxiety raised, the Barrons were confronted to renegotiate their contract. Everyone agreed that "electronic music" was a harmless credit, but to be on the safe side they searched for something else, and it was Dore Schary who came up with that great euphemism, "electronic tonalities" to describe their work. Says an exasperated Barron, "it was lawsuit proof!"

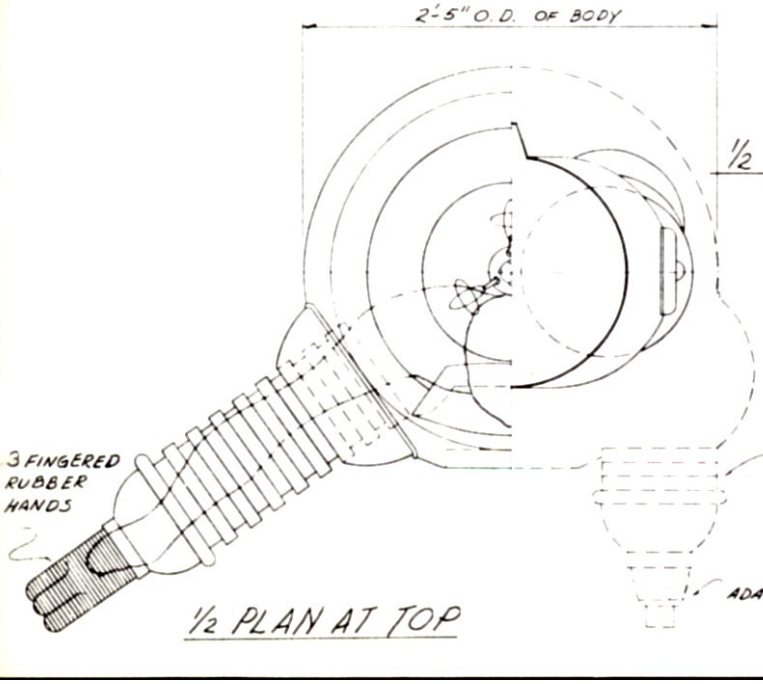
The score of FORBIDDEN PLANET re-continued on page 50

Turn Page for Centerspread
This artwork of Robby the Robot became the key element of MGM's advertising campaign to promote FORBIDDEN PLANET.

Robby, the Robot



1½" PLAN & ELEV.

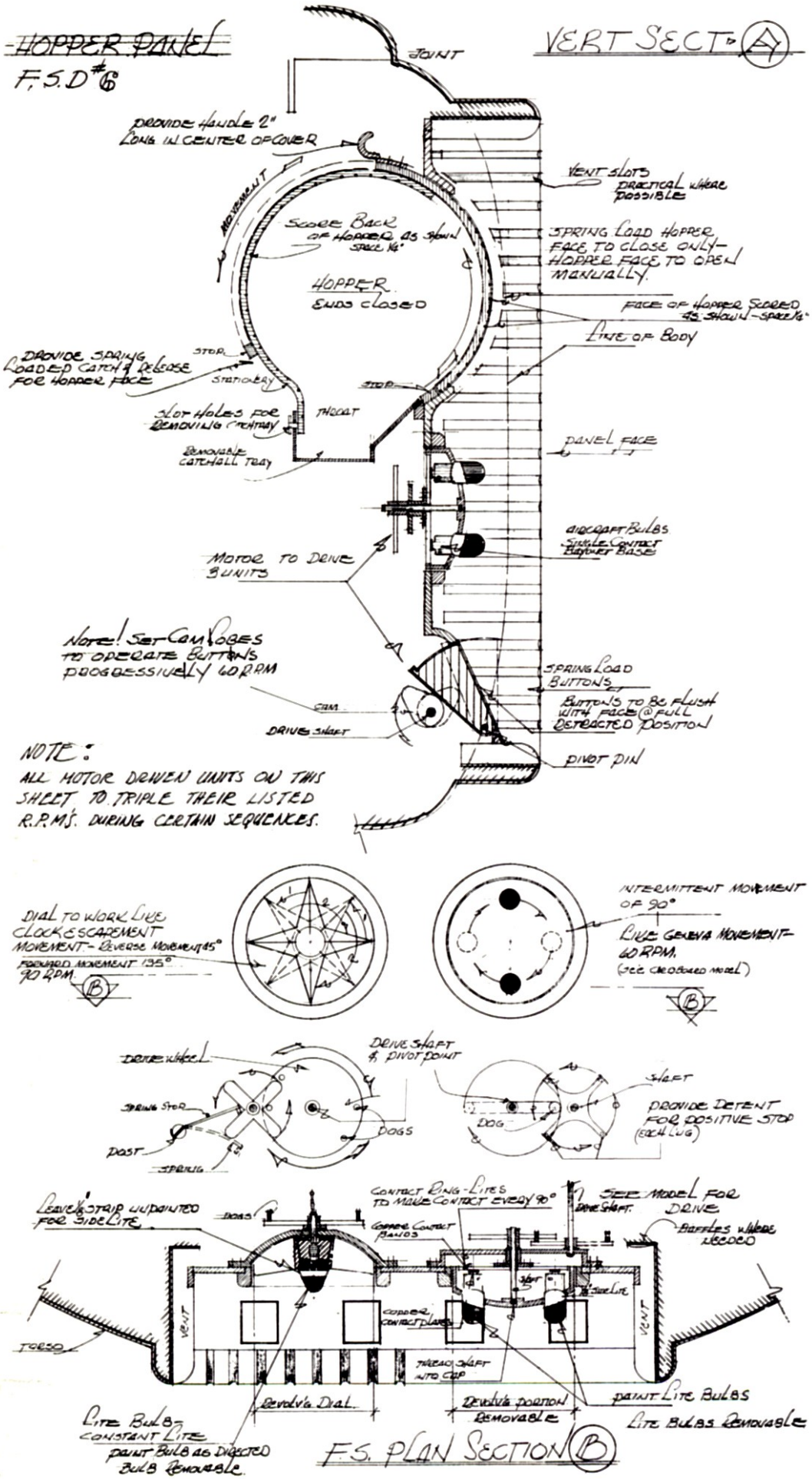


SHEET SCHEDULE

SH	
1	1½" SCALE - PLAN & ELEV.
2	F.S.D # 1 REVOLV'G DOME GADGETS
3	F.S.D # 2 PLASTIC DOME
4	F.S.D # 3 FLEXIBLE SLEEVE & BALL SOCKET
5	F.S.D # 4 LEGS
6	F.S.D # 5 ROTAT'G RINGS
7	F.S.D # 6 ANALYZING HOPPER PANEL
8	F.S.D # 7 VOICE TUBES
9	F.S.D # 2D DOME MECHANICAL LAYOUT
10	F.S.D # 8A GAUNTLET
11	F.S.D # 8B F.S. ALTERNATE GAUNTLET
12	F.S.D # 8C & 8D TOOL ADAPTOR & BEVERAGE SELECTOR
13	F.S.D # 8E PLIERS







Right: Robby poses with three of the men who built him and kept him running smoothly during filming, prop shop technicians Cliff Grant (left), Andy Thatcher (kneeling) and electrician Jack McMasters. Jack Gaylord was in charge of the construction of Robby, and worked out final mechanical problems with his own group of draftsmen and engineers, including Glen Robinson, McMasters, Bob MacDonald and Max Gebinger. Left: F.S.D. 6, a full scale drawing by DeShields of Robby's chest hopper panel, showing the mechanisms to operate the flashing lights and constantly moving parts. It took art department draftsmen, supervised by Bob Kinoshita, eight weeks to draw-up the twelve sheets of full scale drawings to guide the prop shop in the construction of Robby. The robot's body parts were custom molded in plastic, about 1/8 inch thick. First attempts to put the robot together were unsuccessful because the plastic was unable to withstand the stress of the human operator inside. The legs kept cracking under the pressure. A stronger plastic formula made by Royalite, used primarily in the manufacture of suitcases, was used in subsequent castings and the problem was overcome. Royalite plastic was orange in color. The component parts were painted metallic gray after casting. The arms consisted of eight hardwood rings, linked by rubber bellows for extension, attached to the body via a ball-and-socket joint which permitted them to pivot about 40°. Robby's head dome was cast in clear Uvex plastic made by Kodak, and painted over in part to match the body.

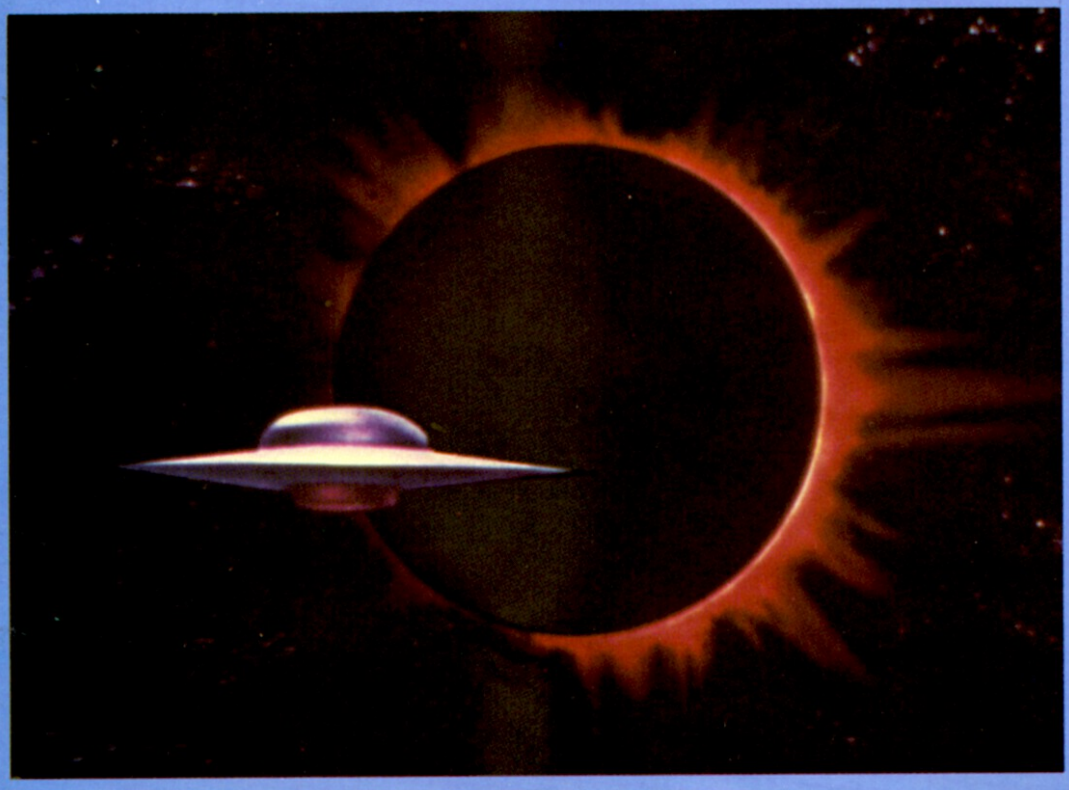
presented a complete breakthrough in film music. Aside from the unique classical orchestrations of Bernard Herrmann for some early science fiction films, most of the musical accompaniment associated with the genre had lacked a degree of originality that was present in the Barrons' work. All the fantastic elements of FORBIDDEN PLANET: the starship's voyage through deep space, the mystery of Altair IV, the horror of the Id, are brought more vividly into being because of the exotic electronic sounds of Louis and Bebe Barron.

Two years ago, in February 1977, the Barrons were finalizing plans for the release of the soundtrack album of their music from FORBIDDEN PLANET (see advertisement on page 86). To help with the artwork and liner notes, Bill Malone, world's number one fan of FORBIDDEN PLANET, had been invited to lend a hand. To refresh everyone's memory, a screening of the original film was arranged and by mistake both Malone and Barron brought prints. It was decided to screen Barron's print from the fifties. FORBIDDEN PLANET begins with the roar of Leo the Lion, sounded against the background of the Barron tonalities. Malone, and everyone else, found it strange that the first few minutes of this print were awkwardly silent. Malone got up to check the sound and was fiddling around with the controls. Barron suddenly threw up his hands, "Wait a second, Bill, this is that old workprint editor Ferris Webster gave to us. There isn't any music on this print at all." Malone could hardly control his excitement. "That's right," remembered Bebe, "this was the print we worked with to develop the musical score." Malone, feeling like Howard Carter on the verge of discovering King Tut's tomb, persuaded everyone to leave the print on, and all settled down to watch a strange version of FORBIDDEN PLANET. It was the first time the workprint had been viewed in twenty-two years.

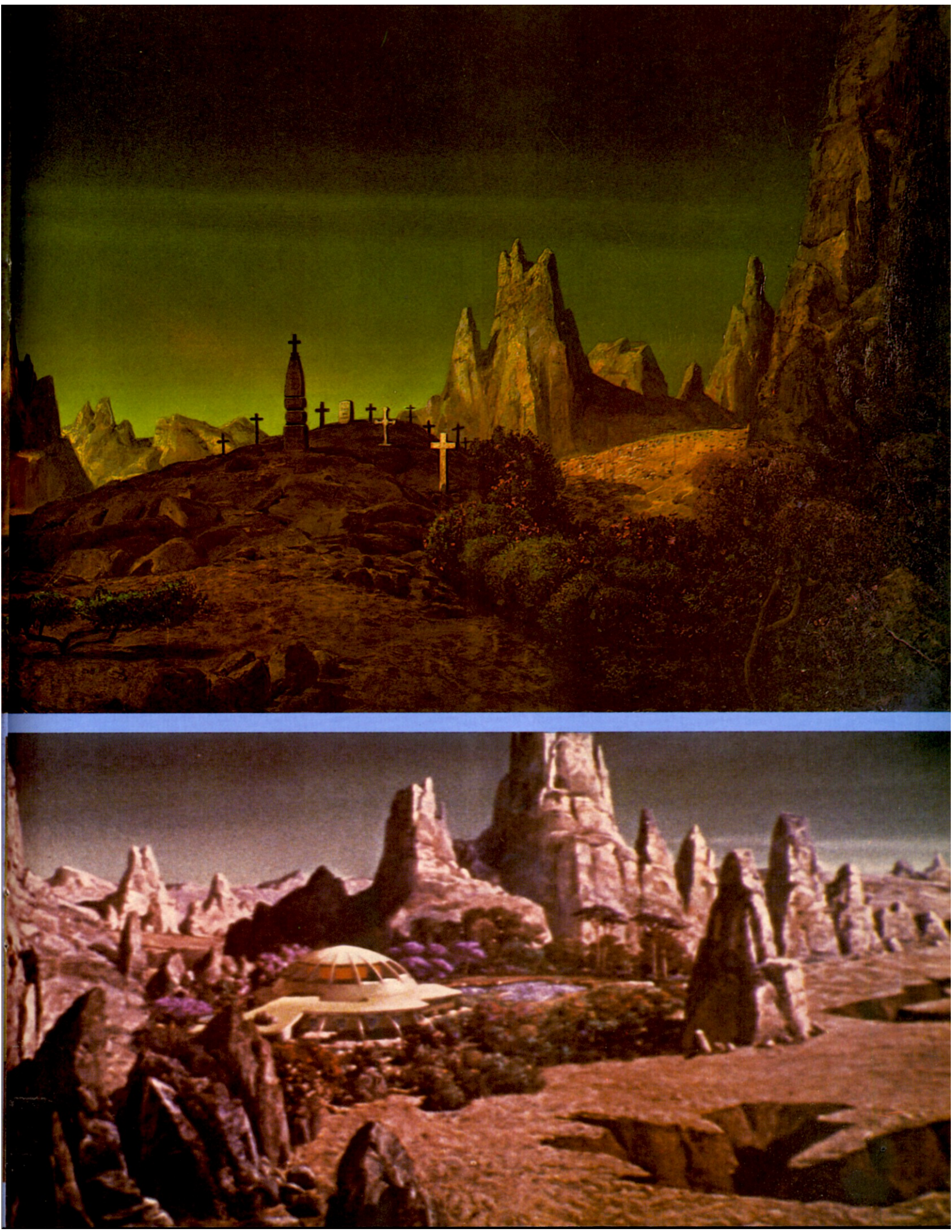
In addition to its absence of music, the

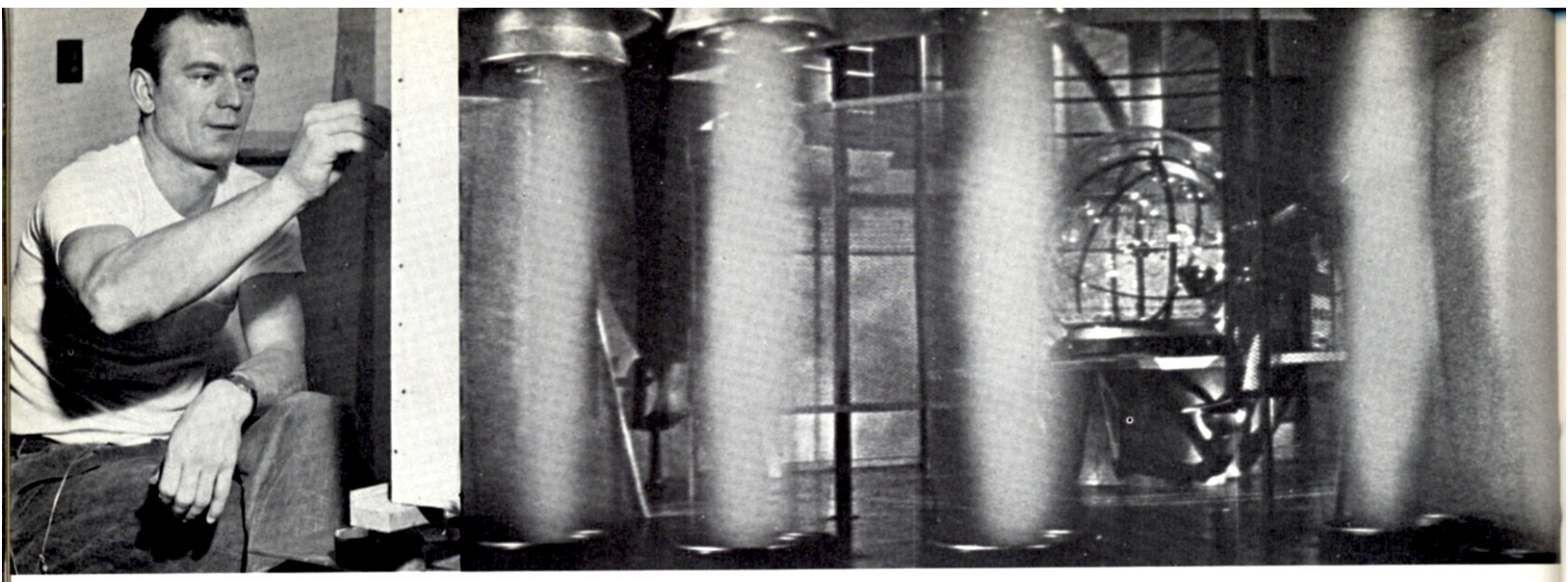
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Above and Right: Matte paintings by Henri Hillinck. The graveyard where Morbius buried the survivors of the Bellerophon expedition, including his own wife (top) is a 20x48" oil painting on masonite. Hillinck developed his own special technique for texturing the rock formations using a razor blade to scrape off paint in selected areas. The landscape and flora were based on photographs of the painted cycloramas and major sets which had already been constructed. The Morbius home (right) was painted from art department designs. Light reflections from water in the pool were filmed separately and double exposed. Hillinck taught Matthew Yuricich his razor blade technique while working on this painting and Yuricich recalls Hillinck complaining about including a live-action matte element of the dust trail of Robby's jeep approaching from the upper right, an idea which was later abandoned. Left: United Planets Cruiser C-57D makes its own eclipse by maneuvering itself between Altair and Altair I, the first planet out from the primary. According to Glen Robinson, this shot was filmed stop-motion, using the large six foot model suspended from wires in front of a sixty-foot wide painted backdrop supplied by Gibson's scenic department. A black movable disc representing Altair I was placed in front of the backdrop artwork of Altair, lit from behind to gradually illuminate the corona artwork by reflection. Lighting on the saucer created the illusion of reflected glow. The saucer's rotating red neon light was replaced by a solid red bottom for stop-motion work.





workprint has very few sound effects and only a few visual effects. It is often hilariously funny. When Robby throws the piece of fruit into the matter disintegrator, it simply bounces against the wall and falls to the floor. Since Marvin Miller had not yet dubbed-in the voice of Robby, we hear the squeaky voice of Frankie Darro from inside the robot. And since the post-synching of the soundtrack had not yet been finished, Robby walks around with a great deal of exterior noise. It was as if a vacuum cleaner was being run constantly in the background. The robot's squeaky voice plus the exterior noise creates a near-hysterical quality whenever Robby appears. You begin to wonder what it must have been like onstage for Leslie Nielsen and Jack Kelly to really converse with the robot.

The workprint is also significantly longer, containing scenes and dialogue missing from the existing version. Ordinarily workprints are destroyed after final editing is completed and the negative has been cut. Even negative trims of footage not incorporated in a film's final cut are usually destroyed after a period of years. The survival of the FORBIDDEN PLANET workprint is a unique case, arising from the fact that the Barrons worked on their musical score in New York and not Hollywood. Since the 35mm work print was needed at MGM for the ongoing postproduction effects work, Webster struck a 16mm Kodachrome reversal reduction print which the Barrons could take back to New York. What had seemed just a dusty old print of the film sitting in Lou Barron's Hollywood music studio, was actually a film historian's treasure, representing FORBIDDEN PLANET as it existed in October 1955 before any previewing and final editing had taken place. "We used to have up to six previews and change the film after each one," said editor Ferris Webster. "Dore Schary always had ideas, and he had the final say. We'd preview the film until it was the way Schary said it should be." After each preview, Webster would incorporate Schary's suggestions into the work print, editing out entire sequences, or just omitting a line or a word to change tone and emphasis.

The workprint starts with the normal MGM introduction, this time with a silent Leo the Lion. There are no credits and we immediately cut to the shot of the space ship heading for Altair IV. The narration, by science fiction film veteran Les Tremayne, begins and the difference is noticed immediately. This is a transcription of the original narration:

"In the final decade of the 21st century, men and women in *chemically fueled* rocket ships landed on the moon. By 2200 A.D., *with the perfecting of atomic propulsion*, they had reached the outer planets of our solar system. Almost at once there followed the discovery of *quanto-gravitetic* hyper drive through which the speed of light was first attained and later greatly surpassed. And so at last mankind, *now banded together in a single federation*, began the conquest and colonization of deep space. United Planets Cruiser C-57D. . ."

The lines in italics above were eliminated during the film's final editing obviously to speed things up. Curiously, some readers reported hearing this dialogue in the film, when it was first shown on television (see Letters 5:1:46). It is possible that some television prints contain some of the material missing from release prints.

Much of the early activity aboard the spaceship remains virtually the same in the work print. However, there are some peculiar differences in dialogue that occur before the ship lands on Altair IV. The first sequence, after the ship dips below light speed, includes an exchange of dialogue between Leslie Nielsen (Commander Adams) and Jack Kelly (Lt. Farman) cut from the final release print.

FARMAN
There's Altair, right on the nose, skipper.

ADAMS
Jerry, you have to stop cutting them so close.

FARMAN
This is close?

ADAMS
Yeah, there's the hull temperature alarm. Put us in the shadow of the first planet out from the primary.

FARMAN
Aye, aye, sir.

ADAMS
Someday you're going to bring us out right inside some star.

FARMAN
And then you'll probably court martial me for it.

Perhaps the exchange was thought to be too light this early in the film, and thus expendable. Unfortunately, this lifted sequence is the only explanation of the hazards of traveling at light speed. Farman, as navigator, must be precise in his calculations, otherwise the space ship would slam into a solid body. In this case, Adams berates him for getting too close to the Altairian sun. Later, on the way down to the surface of the planet, a crewman refers to the near-miss in another bit sequence that was lifted.

CREWMAN
It's getting hot again in here.

CREW
Yeah!

ANOTHER CREWMAN
It's the air friction on the hull.

COOK
Another one of those new worlds.

The Cook's remark is the only line of dialogue that remains from this brief and highly expendable sequence.

While scanning the surface of Altair IV prior to their contact with Morbius, Adams and Dr. Ostrow (Warren Stevens) engage in a small discussion about the fate of the Bellerephon party that was considered expendable.

OSTROW
I doubt that little Bellerephon party built up a civilization in twenty years.

ADAMS
Did you ever ask yourself why they never sent word back.

OSTROW
Oh, they might have cracked up on landing.

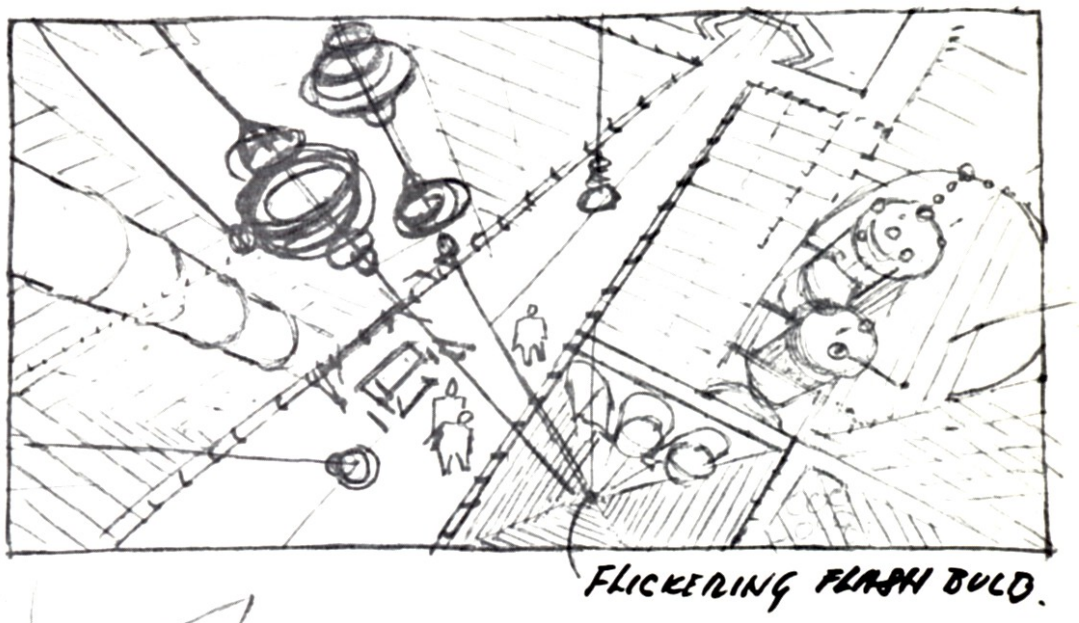
ADAMS
Or they could have made man's first contact with an alien race.

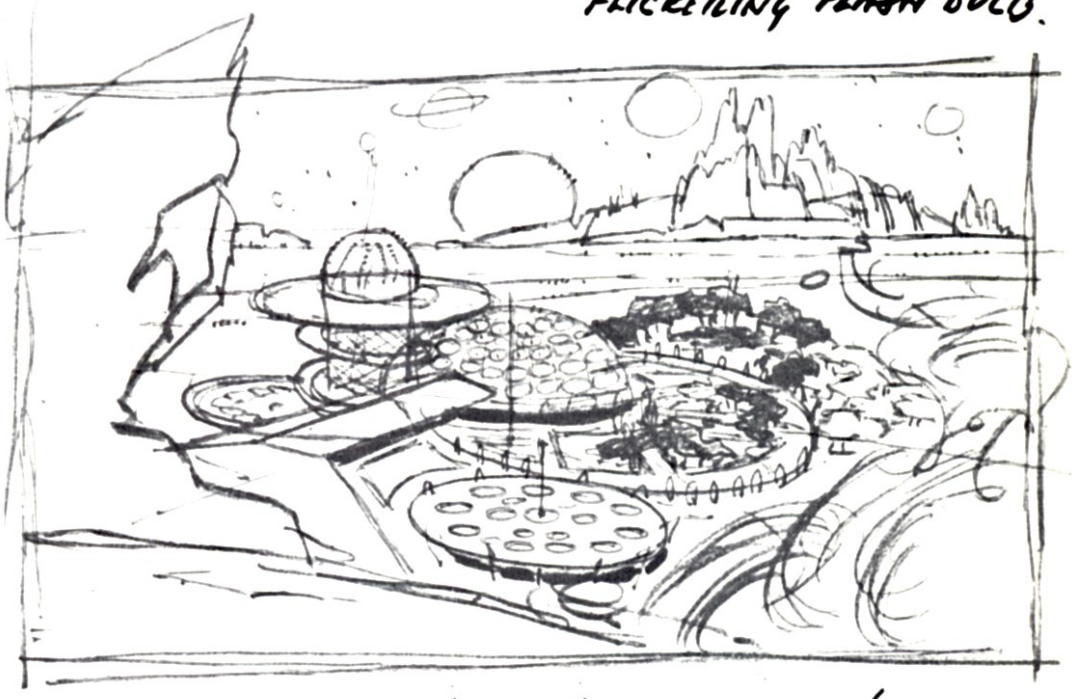
OSTROW
Do you think aliens would be necessarily hostile?

ADAMS
No, they could be anything from archangels to man-eating spiders or a combination of both.

This missing dialogue establishes an important fact about the universe of FORBIDDEN PLANET: that man thus far has found himself to be alone in the cosmos. The fact makes Morbius' discovery of the Krell civilization even more unique and momentous. Commander Adams' reference to archangels and man-eating spiders seems a bit whimsical, considering his rather straight-laced characterization. This was merely the first in a revealing series of edited scenes that show marked changes in

Top Right: Art director Arthur Lonergan's early concept sketch of the Krell ventilation shaft described in the original screenplay. The miniature built for this shot (see following page) follows Lonergan's concept closely. The "Flickering Flash Bulb" indicated on the sketch was to represent the glow of the Krell furnace. In the original script the ventilation shaft and the furnace were part of the same shot. Middle Right: Lonergan's early sketch of the exterior of the Morbius House of Tomorrow indicating a much more elaborate, multi-leveled domed structure. Bottom Right: Lonergan's sketch of the Morbius house corresponding to the preliminary layout shown on page 9, less elaborate, but still representing more than one level. Production illustrator Mentor Huebner produced design paintings from Lonergan's sketches to guide the Newcombe department in the preparation of the matte painting used to represent the Morbius house, shown on the preceding pages. Far Left: Matte artist Matthew Yuricich circa 1955. Yuricich worked as an assistant in the Newcombe matte department and supplied the airbrush matte art for the effect (left) when the crewmen take their DC stations for the deceleration from hyperspace to sub-light speeds. Newcombe enrolled him in a special art class to learn the airbrush technique which transformed the crew into glowing blue columns of light energy. "Now everyone uses it," says Yuricich, referring to the similar design and effect of the ship's transporter on STAR TREK.





the make-up of the major characters. And by removing this note of curiosity and uneasiness about the fate of the Bellerephon, the rescue mission to Altair IV seems merely businesslike and routine.

Upon landing, and through much of the interplay with Robby, who comes out to welcome the spaceship, the film remains the same. It is only when Robby drives off in the shuttle car, to take Adams, Ostrow and Farman to Morbius, that a startling difference occurs.

In the release prints of FORBIDDEN PLANET, the car leaves the area of the saucer, is seen in long shots speeding through the Altairian desert, and seconds later arrives at the oasis of the Morbius house. In the workprint, once they leave the ship, Robby and his companions follow a dirt track through the mountains of Altair IV, driving at supersonic speed, much to the consternation of the space men. In a purposely funny closeup of the group, with rather amateur rear projection showing the great speed of the car, Adams expresses his nervousness.

ADAMS
Hey Robby, hold the speed down!

ROBBY
Have no apprehension sir, my built-in reflexes are infallible.

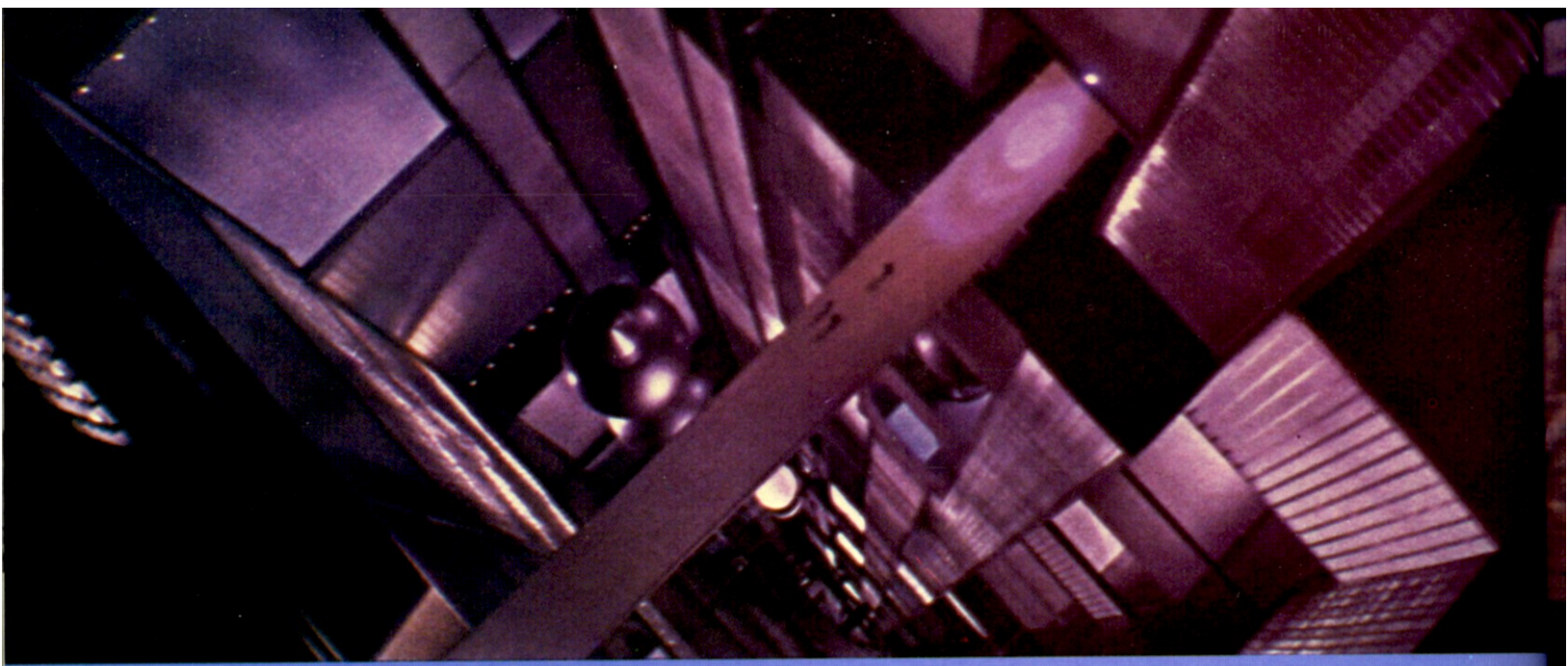
OSTROW
He says to keep your shirt on, skipper. His built-in reflexes are infallible.

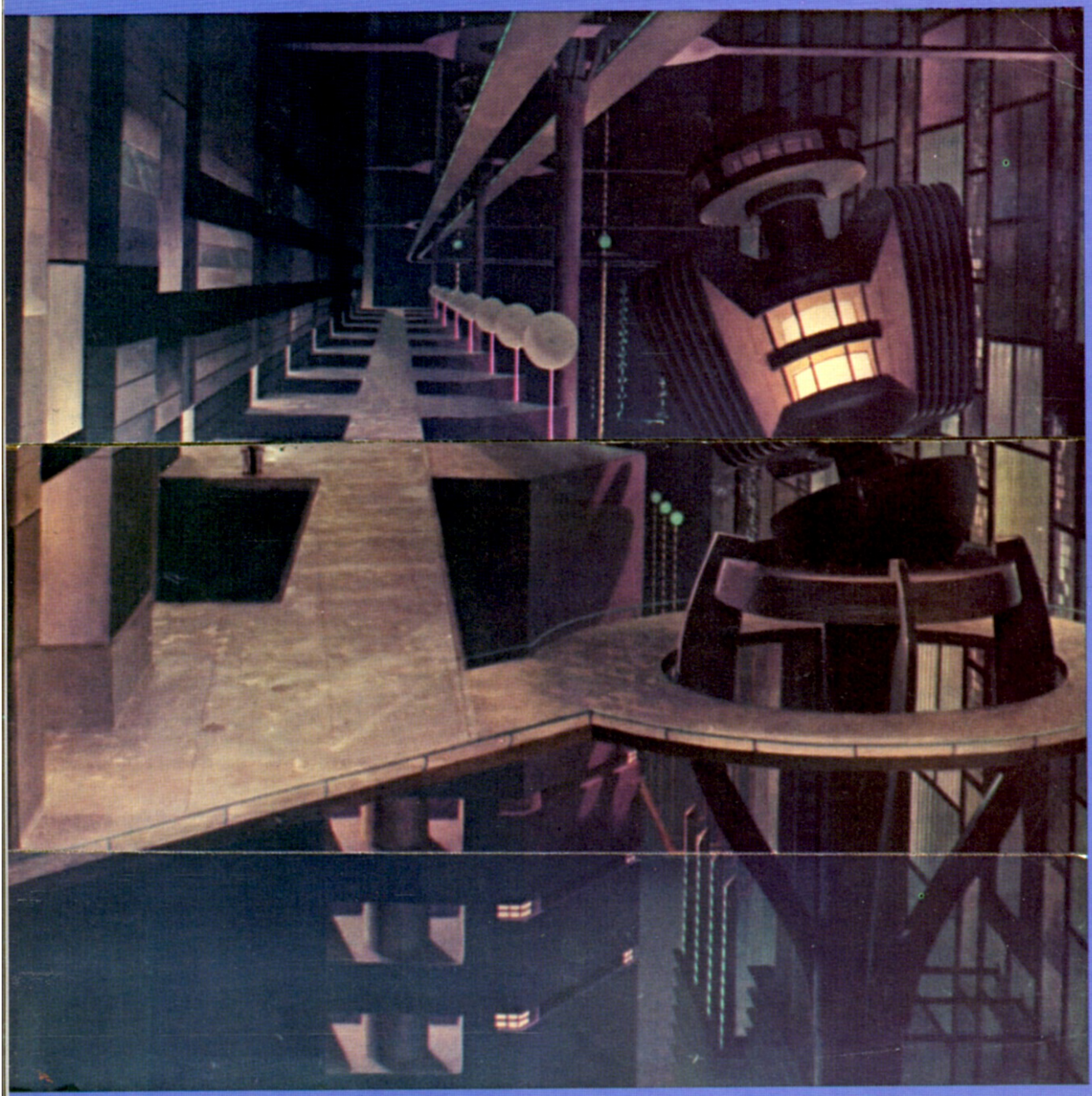
Robby then turns his head entirely around and looks straight at the officers.

ADAMS
Then speak English for pete's sake and at least watch where you're going.

ROBBY
Not necessary. I do everything by pulsetonic transfiguration.

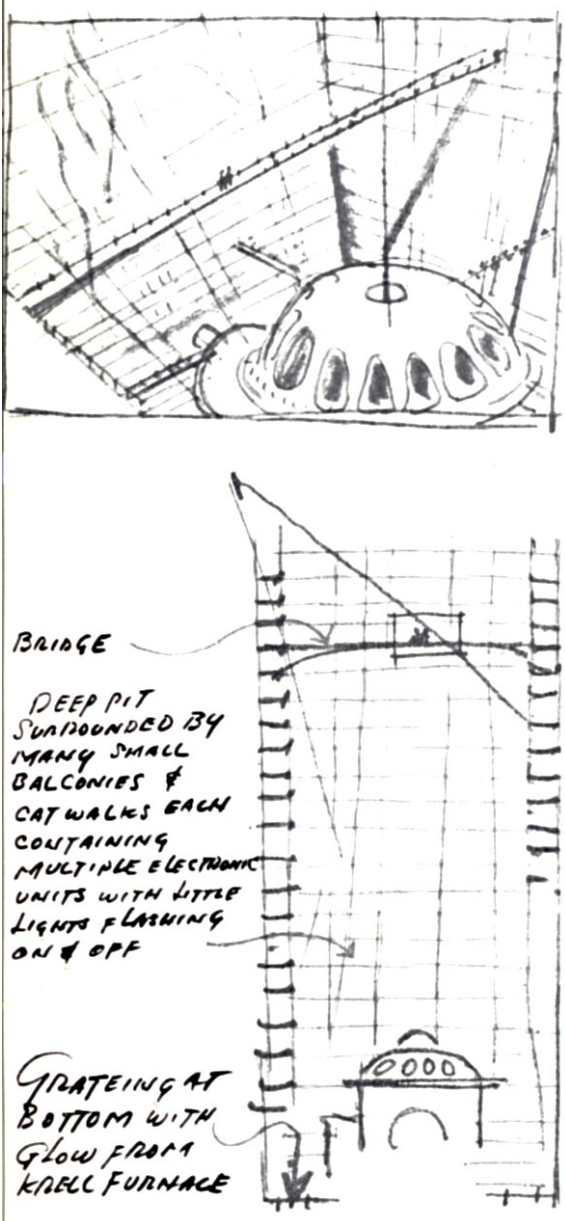
Once this closeup sequence is completed, the workprint cuts to a shot of the jeep miniature filmed on Lot 3. But the miniature shot, and especially the rear projection work, was not convincing enough, and
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Right: Cartoon animation effects supplied by Joshua Meador. The saucer's landing force field (top) was rotoscoped frame by frame for proper alignment with the descending ship. Low density mattes were used to composite the effect so that the field would appear transparent. The beams of Robby's weapons neutralizers (middle) disable the guns of Doc Ostrow (Warren Stevens) and Commander Adams (Leslie Nielsen). The monster from the Id (bottom), the astonishing centerpiece of one of the greatest sequences in the history of special visual effects. Top Left: The Krell Ventilation Shaft featured an airbrushed matte artwork lighting effect by Matt Yuricich which was double exposed onto the miniature because the walking figures of Morbius, Adams & Ostrow were hardly noticeable. "I'm having the same kind of problem with Mr. Spock right now," joked Yuricich, referring to the large scale paintings he is doing for the new STAR TREK feature. "When we saw the shaft composite together, I suggested putting a light on each end to attract attention to the moving figures. That still wasn't enough, so I talked Warren Newcombe into having the spotlights cast concentric circles of light onto the walkway surface, pulsating, so that the eye would catch these figures walking there." Below Left: Matte shot cameramen filmed the painting of the Krell Furnace in three sections as shown and turned the footage over to Irving Reis' optical department to be put together on the optical printer incorporating a camera tilt down.





Schary ordered the sequence removed.

One of the key observations made during the viewing of the work print is the difference in the character of Dr. Morbius (Walter Pidgeon). In the release version, he exudes a sterile quality when welcoming the men to the planet and his discussion of the Bellerephon's fate is rather quick and to the point. He offers little emotion or hesitance. An expert in languages, he seems to have picked his words carefully, doing as little talking as possible.

In the work print, there is a considerable difference in these welcoming scenes. When discussing the horrible fate of the Bellerephon party, and his strange immunity, Morbius prefaces with, "I wish I could answer without sounding too fanciful or unscientific." This preface was later eliminated and Morbius' recollection was made more emphatic and less pensive.

In the workprint, Morbius meanders over the past, unsure of himself. He is melancholy, less precise. In the final version, thanks to a great deal of dialogue editing, he begins to talk straight from the shoulder, as if he is actually trying to make the officers' stay short and to the point.

The next major change occurs in the Morbius garden when Alta (Anne Francis) summons her pets. Writer Irving Block pointed out that in his original story Alta's power over her animals was based on a legend that only a true virgin can tame a unicorn. This explanation is actually mentioned in the workprint, in a conversation in the garden. Morbius is speaking with the Doctor and Adams while Alta plays with her tiger.

MORBIUS
How would you explain it, doctor?

OSTROW
A medieval myth of the unicorn.

ADAMS
Myths aren't exactly in my line, doctor.

OSTROW
Well, the unicorn was like a snow white horse, with the legs of an antelope and the tail of a lion and a single straight horn that grew out of the middle of his front. He was the wisest and most savage of beasts, yet more than beast because with all his soul the unicorn worshipped purity. And when he met a maiden in the forest, he'd run gently to her and kneel before her. She'd sit down and take his fierce head in her lap and lull him to sleep.

Later, as Ostrow and Adams stroll outside the ship that evening (see photos pages 41 bottom, 64 bottom), they continue their conversation.

OSTROW
You know, skipper, there's still two or three questions I'd like to have answered.

ADAMS
Yeah, that tiger of hers.

OSTROW
Personally, I still prefer the medieval explanation.

ADAMS
What? Do you mean that?

OSTROW
Most all superstitions have their roots in real science.

ADAMS
Yes, alchemy and the transmutation of metals is elementary atomics nowadays.

OSTROW
And nowadays any schoolboy knows that the brain sends out electronic impulses. The brain itself is monitored by the glandular system.

ADAMS
Ohhhh. . .so you take an exceptionally fine brain in a totally unevolved female body?

OSTROW
Sure!

ADAMS
And it is conceivable that its quantum waves could set up some special and soothing resonance in the reflex patterns of a wild animal. Course it would be a pity when the time comes, won't it, for her to lose a gift like that.

OSTROW
Yes, I guess it will. But you know every now and then even a very fine thing can be replaced by something finer still.

ADAMS
Oh, like what?

OSTROW
Love.

ADAMS
Oh, you're quite a heart specialist, Doc.

Whatever their interest and relevance, protracted conversations like this were eliminated from the release print in favor of a more rapid approach. There is a good pace in the early moments of FORBIDDEN PLANET, as the audience becomes acquainted with the strange world of Altair IV. Conversations like this were simply considered dead weight so early in the film. All mention of the unicorn myths and modern science were snipped from the film. Alta's charm and innocence, rather than any psychological power appears to tame the wild beast.

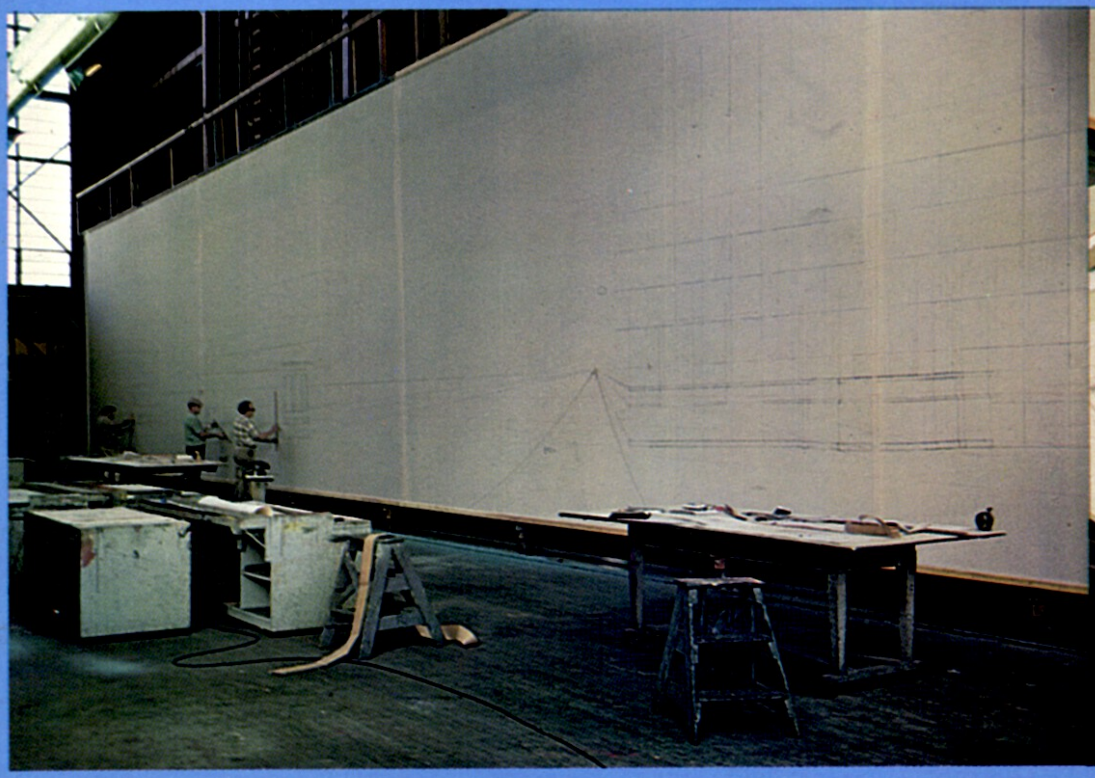
Certainly no surprise is the editing of Jack Kelly's last line in the kissing sequence with Alta. Farman (after failing to stimulate Alta): "Are you giving me the same treatment you gave to that dumb unicorn?" Not only was this line of dialogue ridiculous, it didn't make any sense. The

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Right: Shot No. 4475, Int. Krell Cube, so called because the underground complex was twenty miles square and deep, commonly referred to as the Krell furnace. The top two panels show Howard Fisher's 48" square matte painting without its composite live action element. The bottom panel shows the matte portion of the painting with a final composite of footage of the actors filmed from a high angle as they walked along an empty stage at MGM. The matte painting was square to facilitate a camera tilt down during the shot, which followed the movement of the actors as they walked along. Note that nothing supports the platform on which the actors appear to be standing, something that never becomes apparent in the film because the entire shot is never seen at one time. The matte department filmed the painting on three separate pieces of film, corresponding to the three panels as shown. Irving Reis combined this footage on the optical printer, overlapping the three sections as seen in the color shot on the preceding pages, and incorporated the camera tilt down. The use of a moving camera in a matte shot is extremely complex, and added greatly to the realism of the sequence. Numerous flashing lights in the scene were added to the painting via a separate light board. Holes representing the lights were drilled onto a black board registered to the painting, lit from behind and double exposed. The shots reproduced here were light board and composite tests made in November 1955 while the work was being completed. Left: Another early concept by art director Arthur Lonergan for the combination ventilation shaft and Krell furnace as described in the original script, which was eventually done as two separate shots.

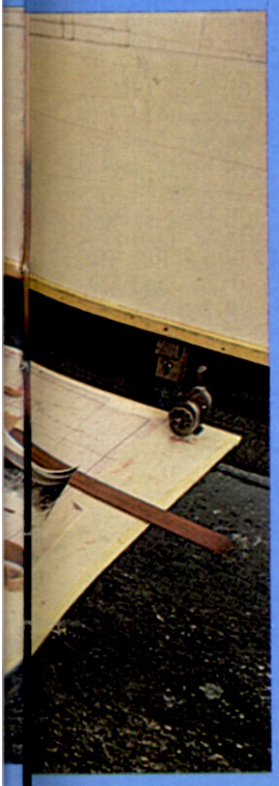












Above: Two scenes which illustrate the effectiveness of the cyclorama backings produced by George Gibson's scenic department. Right: Lt. Farman (Jack Kelly) greets Alta (Anne Francis) when she accompanies Robby to the ship to deliver lead shielding for the main drive, needed to power communications back to Earth. Left: Chief Quinn (Richard Anderson, right) shows Adams (Leslie Nielsen) and Ostrow (Warren Stevens) his final assembly for the monitor unit of the Klystron transmitter. "I'll bet any Quantum Mechanic in the service would give the rest of his life to fool around with this gadget," he says. "It came packed in liquid boron in suspended gravity." Bottom Right: Bill Malone's Robby poses in front of a section of one of the original cycloramas used in the film. Bottom Left: George Gibson goes over art department plans to prepare a cyclorama for painting. Far Left: Scenic department artists sketch the details to be painted onto the huge muslin canvases. Two 100' wide sections are shown. The building designed by Gibson for the production of the cycloramas permitted four 100' sections to be hung for painting at one time, each up to 40' high. The frames could be raised or lowered through the floor of the building, manipulated at will by the artists to access each section of the muslin to be painted. The use of huge, full color painted backdrops developed as a result of MGM's production of THE WIZARD OF OZ in 1938. At the time, the backdrops were being painted on any unoccupied stages available at the studio.





entire kissing sequence, in fact, is edited from the current theatrical prints, which were struck for use in kiddie matinee programs, although the scene is usually included on television.

Morbius' fascinating discussion of the Krell civilization as presented in the work print is basically the same, with one exception, a rather humorous one. After he mentions the Krell once walked on our own Earth, collecting many of the creatures that now appear in Alta's garden, Ostrow asks a valid question that was later eliminated.

OSTROW
What about our primitive ancestors: Cro-Magnon? Pithecanthropus?

MORBIUS
Apparently such creatures were beneath the notice of the Krell.

The dialogue may have been trimmed because Morbius' reply is slightly illogical. The Krell most likely neglected to bring back specimens of the ancestors of man out of compassion for a highly evolved species capable of intelligence, not out of disinterest. Later in the workprint, Morbius' early hesitancy is revealed once more when he tells the officers about the Krell machines. In one sequence that would eventually be entirely redubbed, Morbius mentions the Krell machinery in a rather offhand manner, as if he's really saying, "I'll discover the meaning of this stuff one day when I have the time." This lack of emphasis was later tightened up by Walter Pidgeon. As editor Ferris Webster explained, it was a simple matter to change the film's narration and dialogue. Redubbing was no problem. The actors could be called back and complete any changes in one day. As the dialogue was reduced in certain sections, Morbius begins to talk with more exactness. While Morbius is rather indecisive in the workprint, Commander Adams is much more human and curious. In the final editing, Adams became a much more businesslike captain, less of a dreamer and thus much more suitable for a love/hate relationship with Alta.

In the workprint, the trip to the Krell underground complex is handled differently. After the scene inside the tube car, there is a brief, *static* matte shot without dialogue as Morbius and his companions walk *up* through the Krell furnace toward the entrance to the ventilation shaft. This shot was later removed to tighten the pacing, as it merely duplicates the action in the following shot of the Krell furnace, a fuller view incorporating a camera tilt down, as the group walks back, after having viewed the ventilation shaft. A later scene, also cut from the workprint, had shown the tube car's terminus to be in the chamber (see page 45) that houses the viewing portals which look into the Krell furnace, and the first matte shot had been included to explain how the group got from the tube car to the ventilation shaft. Also cut from the scene is a final bit of dialogue. As the group is about to head back toward the tube car to leave, Adams repeats a question Morbius had failed to answer only moments before, "But Dr. Morbius, I asked you, what's it all for?" This time Morbius replies, "After twenty years of unremitting labor, I have found no answer to that awful question." By omitting this exchange, the film makes Morbius seem less confused, and gives the impression that Morbius has simply ignored Adams' earlier question, an effective stalemate, since it allows the audience to continue in their suspicion that Morbius knows more than he is telling.

After the Chief is killed at night, the first victim of the rampaging Id, a sequence in the workprint inside the ship, shows Commander Adams going through his friend's few personal effects. The scene is unintentionally humorous and was later chopped.

ADAMS
Next of kin, his mother.

CREWMAN
Yes sir.

ADAMS
(the Commander holds up a little envelope, obviously containing all that remains of the chief)
Well, that's all that's left of him.

CREWMAN
I'll take care of this personally for you, John.

While Robby is a comical presence in the workprint, replete with a scratchy voice and unedited noise, the Id monster is even worse. A scratchy recording of a lion's roar stands-in temporarily for the Id's fearsome bellowing, a sound effect that had not yet been created by Dr. Wesley C. Miller, head of the MGM sound department. This may explain why some who worked on the film felt the Id was inspired by MGM's own Leo the Lion.

Other than continued dialogue editing to strenthen the various roles, the workprint's final surprise occurs when the Bosun alerts the crew to pack up and prepare for departure. There is a sudden resounding cheer from the assembled crew members, absent from the release print, as they express their intense desire to leave Altair IV and return to Earth. The value of the FORBIDDEN PLANET workprint lies not only in its minute comparisons with the released version, but in the fact that it offers another dimension to the film itself. Seldom is one allowed to view a finished film without its musical soundtrack. Walter Pidgeon, while attending the premiere of FORBIDDEN PLANET in New York, remarked to the Barrons that he felt "the music transformed the film." After viewing the bland, atmosphereless quality of the workprint, one can only agree with Pidgeon.

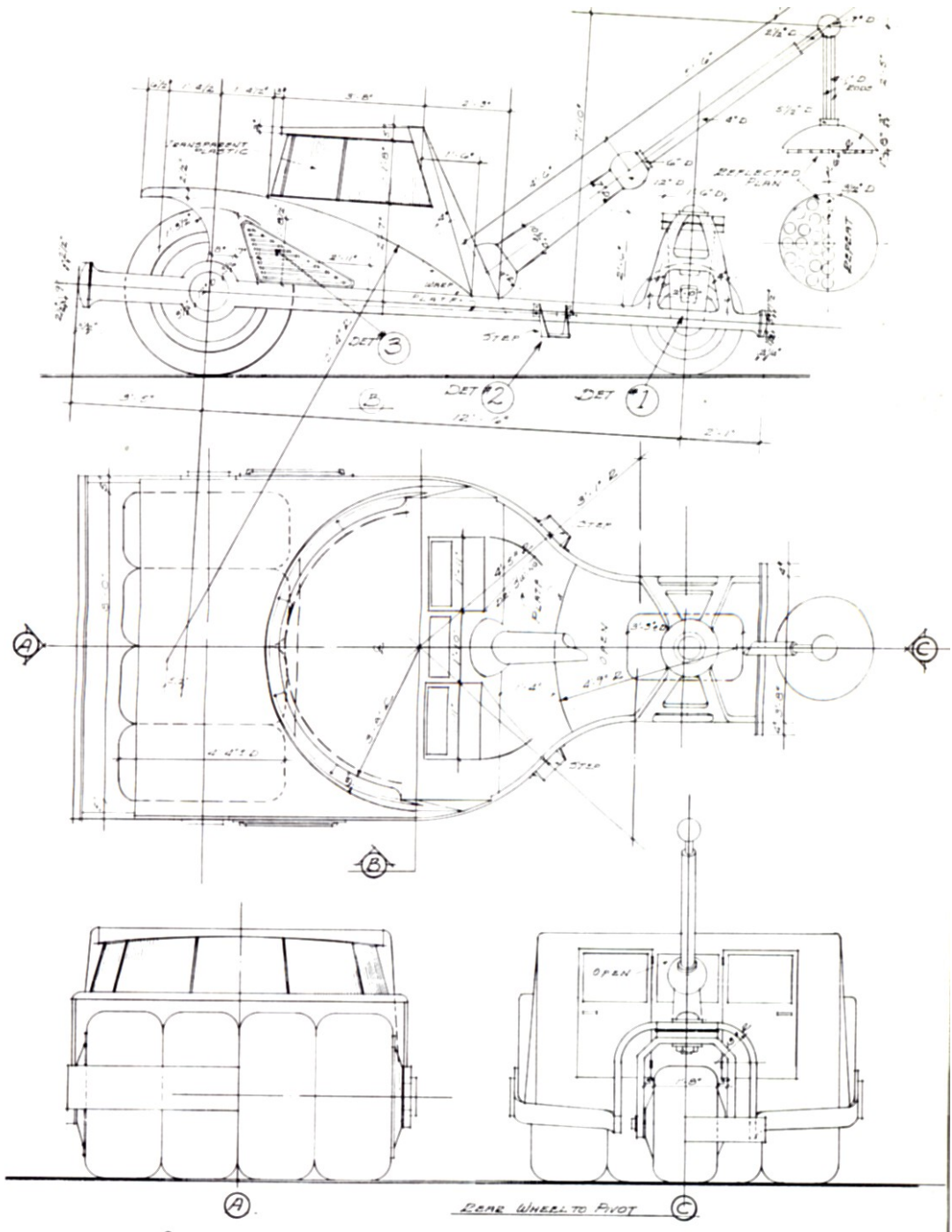
Previewing and final editing of FORBIDDEN PLANET was completed by the end of February, almost fifteen months after preproduction work had commenced. What had begun as a low-budget feature at the studio had escalated through budget overruns in construction and special effects into a very expensive picture, the first science fiction film ever to cost more than a million dollars to make. No precise budget figure for the film is known. Dore Schary estimates that FORBIDDEN PLANET "cost us far less than $2,000,000." The cost was estimated by Lonergan and Gillespie to be about $1,900,000. Such figures seem miniscule by today's standards, but were sizable at a time when the most expensive movie ever made at MGM cost only $5,000,000 (QUO VADIS in 1951). "FORBIDDEN PLANET was an expensive picture," says Lonergan, "even in the category of the kind of quality pictures MGM was famous for. Films were budgeted 'above the line' and 'below the line.'* This was ex-

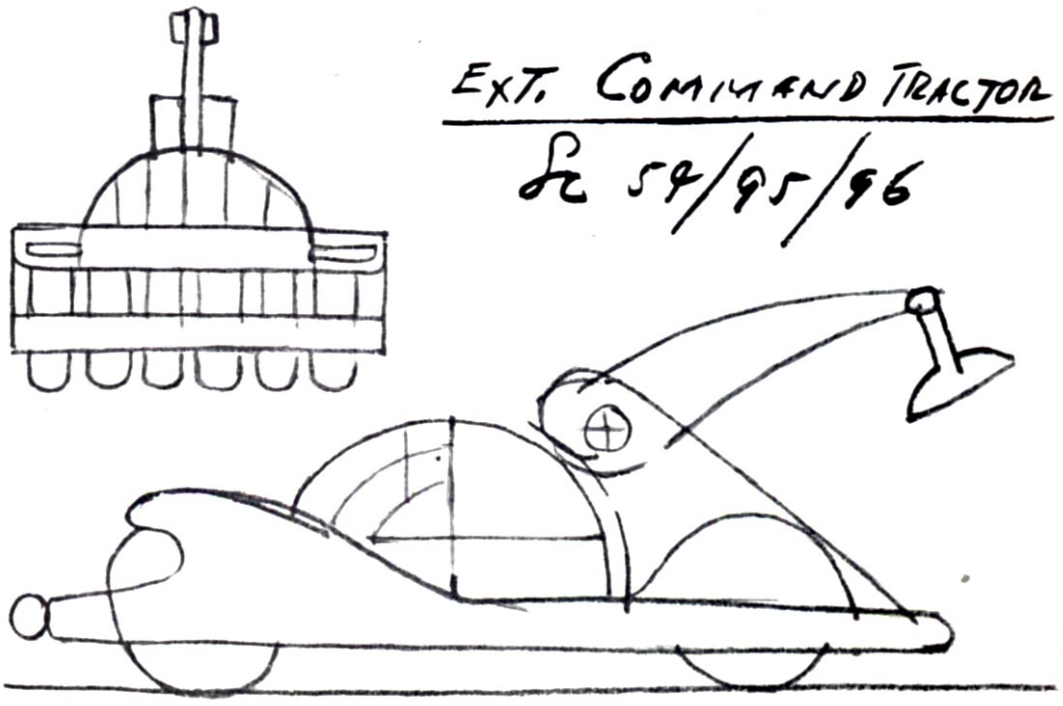
*"Above the line" expense, strictly speaking, refers to the cost of anyone or anything exploitable enough to be billed above a film's title (the "line") in advertising. Generally speaking it refers to the expense of stars and major creative personnel such as writers, directors and producers. Conversely, "below the line" expense refers to the cost of anyone or anything billed below the title, or not billed at all. Generally speaking it refers to most production costs and is often referred to as the money that is seen up on the screen.

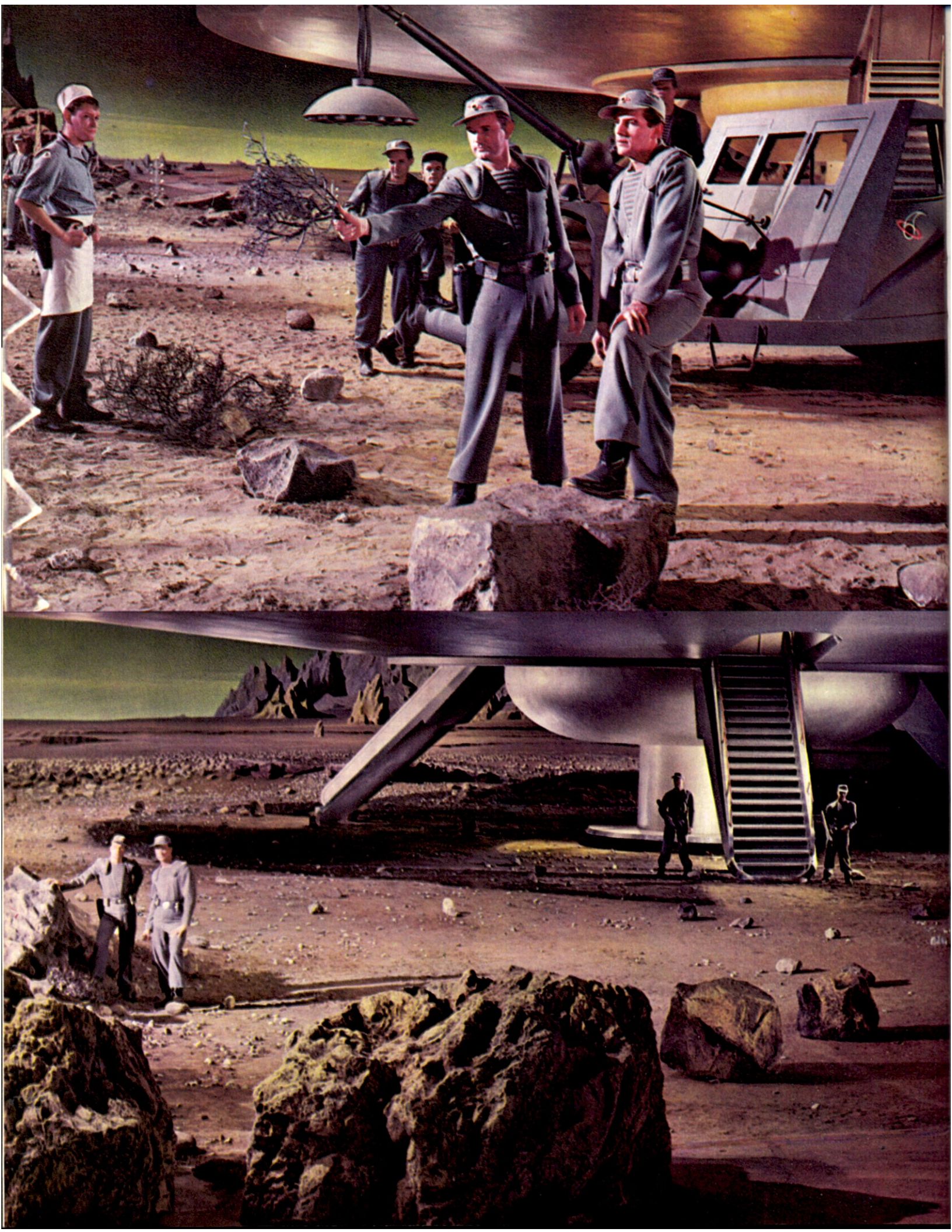
Top Right: Draftsmen DeWitt and Kleine's 3/4" scale plan for the construction of the ship's tractor, an all-terrain vehicle capable of negotiating the rough desert lands of Altair IV. Bottom Right: Art director Arthur Lonergan's early concept sketch for the tractor design. The final design, shown as it appeared in the film on the following page, was developed by A. Arnold Gillespie, working with art department draftsmen. Left: Louis and Bebe Barron, at work in their Greenwich Village studio at the end of 1955, putting together the electronic circuits needed to create the unique musical score which adds greatly to the effectiveness of the film. Originally hired to create sounds for the scene were Morbius plays a recording of Krell musicians for Adams and Ostrow, the Krell music composed by the Barrons fittingly became the background score for the entire film.

pensive 'below the line' and very inexpensive 'above the line.' There were a lot of pictures made at MGM much more expensive than FORBIDDEN PLANET, but they cost more because of 'above the line' expense." Added editor Ferris Webster, "The sets and Disney were the most expensive things. The cast cost them minus nothing. Freddy [Wilcox] got no dough and Nicky [Nayfack] didn't get much money. FORBIDDEN PLANET was definitely a B-picture." The budget overruns caused by Lonergan and Gillespie's elaborate designs for props, sets and special effects had resulted in an anomaly, an expensive B-picture. Studio chief Dore Schary had to authorize the additional production costs as they came up, evidently feeling that they were justified after all. "I'd been watching the dailies," says Schary, "and I had a special feeling about the picture. I never felt it was necessary, if you had an unusual picture like FORBIDDEN PLANET, to load it with an all-star cast. If you were spending the money on production value, why not use very good people who may not be big stars? I think this has been proven out in recent years with pictures like JAWS, STAR WARS, THE EXORCIST, and so on. Those pictures didn't have big stars." But JAWS and THE EXORCIST were based on best-selling books, and STAR WARS was written and directed by George Lucas, a top director responsible for one of the highest grossing pictures of all time. The high production cost of FORBIDDEN PLANET was a much bigger gamble for Dore Schary. In 1955 it simply ran counter to common practice in the industry to spend lots of money on a science fiction film, or lots of money on any film without stars. "In all immodesty," explains Schary, "I ran counter to the common practice very often."

FORBIDDEN PLANET was tradescreened on March 14, 1956 and went into general release on March 30, with prints available in stereophonic sound. *Variety* called it an "exciting science fiction thriller with solid earning potential." MGM promoted the fact that it was the studio's first attempt at science fiction and that "years" and "millions" had been spent in its making. Robby the Robot was the focal point of the film's promotion, and was given equal billing with Walter Pidgeon, Anne Francis and Leslie Nielsen. Robby appeared on television to promote the film, on THE PERRY COMO SHOW with Anne Francis, and on TODAY with Dave Garroway. The image of Robby holding Altaira in his arms was the key element of the film's advertising artwork and posters (see







Top Left: The Bosun (George Wallace) tosses a branch to test the ship's force field, as the Cook (Earl Holliman), Lt. Farman (Jack Kelly) and members of the crew, congregated around the ship's tractor, look on. Bottom Left: The set-up used to film the live-action element of the matte shot of the full ship at night, shown on page 41. Note the bare soundtage floor. Top Right: Robby was exploited for THE INVISIBLE BOY, MGM's weak follow-up to FORBIDDEN PLANET, and teamed with Richard Eyer, best known as the genie in Ray Harryhausen's THE 7TH VOYAGE OF SINBAD. Middle Right: Robby, Eyer, Diane Brewster and Philip Abbott on art director Merril Pye's computer set, the film's only suggestion of production value. Bottom: Producer Nicholas Nayfack and director Herman Hoffman during location filming. Nayfack died in 1958, shortly after its release, at the age of 49.

centerspread). Robby was also featured prominently for a promotional tie-in with the Quaker Oats cereal company which distributed 80,000,000 free tickets in boxes of their product, for children under twelve when accompanied by a paying adult to see FORBIDDEN PLANET. Since MGM aimed the thrust of their promotion at the "kiddie" market, it seems strange that they chose to release the film during a period when children were still in school, rather than during the summer months. FORBIDDEN PLANET played extensively at theatres nationwide throughout the months of April and May, placing last in *Variety's* list of twelve top money-making pictures for those months. By June, the picture had played-out in most key markets and disappeared from the *Variety* list, never to reappear. *Variety's* ranking of the top money-making pictures for 1956, placed FORBIDDEN PLANET number 62 among 109 pictures with an estimated take of $1,000,000 or more. GUYS AND DOLLS, also an MGM picture, was listed as the top money earner at $9 million. FORBIDDEN PLANET, according to the *Variety* list, made $1,600,000. Of fifteen MGM pictures among the top moneymakers, eleven earned more than FORBIDDEN PLANET. Other science fiction films released that year which made top money included EARTH VS. THE FLYING SAUCERS (number 85 with $1,250,000), INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS (number 89 with $1,200,000) and TARANTULA (number 100 with $1,100,000).

If the *Variety* estimates are accepted as being fairly accurate, then FORBIDDEN PLANET barely took in what it cost to produce and was a boxoffice failure for MGM. Although it was the top money-making science fiction picture of the year, a film like EARTH VS. THE FLYING SAUCERS was far more profitable, earning 78% of what FORBIDDEN PLANET had made on a fraction of its production cost. Dore Schary disputes the *Variety* numbers, saying, "We made money on the film. I've looked at their estimates for some of the pictures I know a good deal about and they're absolutely wrong." In a May 1957 interview, producer Nicholas Nayfack announced that FORBIDDEN PLANET took in over "$4,550,000" for the studio in its initial release, although at the time he was ballyhooing his next production for the press. (The film is *not* listed among *Variety's* all-time boxoffice champs, which includes pictures making $4,000,000 or more). What seems certain is that FORBIDDEN PLANET was no big success, if a success at all, for it failed to influence Hollywood's thinking about science fiction. Cheap, low-budget productions continued to be the rule. Studios wrote-off the thematic innovations of FORBIDDEN PLANET, star travel, robotics, alien civilizations, as money-losers, concepts so costly to achieve on film that they could not be supported by what was perceived to be a limited market for the genre.

MGM followed FORBIDDEN PLANET's brief glimmer of quality with THE INVISIBLE BOY, a low-budget spin-off featuring Robby the Robot and reuniting producer Nicholas Nayfack, writer Cyril Hume and Irving Block, the co-author of the original film, who this time handled special effects with partner Jack Rabin. Says Block, "They corrupted poor Robby and made him into a heavy. He was always designed as a good robot, not a destructive machine." THE INVISIBLE BOY was the initial project of Pan Productions, an independent company formed in the summer of 1956 by Nayfack and named for his wife, Pandora. Tired of bureaucratic pressure and interference and anxious to reap the benefits of a successful production, Nayfack was seeking independence like many harried contract producers at the time. It was easy to become trapped at MGM, as director Herman Hoffman, Nayfack's associate in the new company, points out: "Nicky had to get out. He never saw a penny of his film's profits. A failure, or a success, was treated the same way. You simply picked up your weekly paycheck and were handed a new film. MGM had no such thing as percentages for line producers. And if you ever mentioned the thought of leaving they would really seduce you, offering you another raise, more money here or more money there. Nicky was no dummy, he knew it was time to get out."

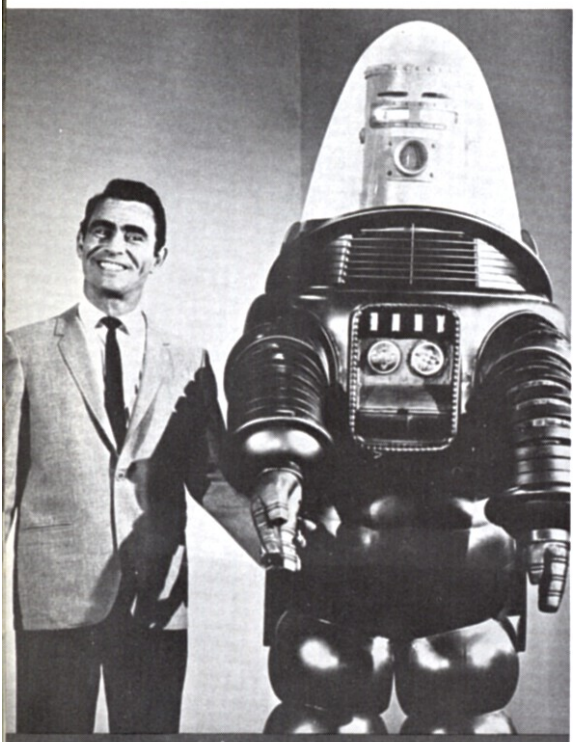
The idea to capitalize on the reuse of Robby the Robot occurred to Nayfack when he spotted a story by Edmund Cooper in the June 23, 1956 issue of *The Saturday Evening Post*, an innocuous little farce subtitled *The Story of Timothy—the World's Worst Problem Child*, about the dullard son of a computer scientist who is transformed into a precocious supergenius by the electronic brain run by his father. Nayfack bought the story and made a distribution deal with MGM that included the proviso that he was permitted to use any of the material left over from FORBIDDEN PLANET, including Robby. MGM also offered Nayfack their studio facilities, sound stages, crew and special effects team for use in the production of THE INVISIBLE BOY, but Nayfack turned them down, preferring to make the film in black and white, away from the studio, on a paltry budget of only $400,000.

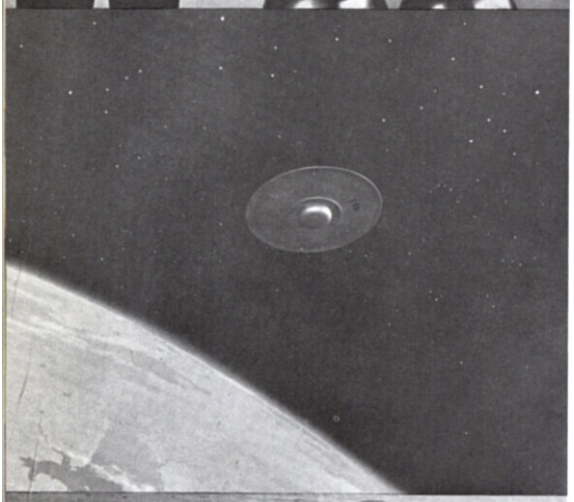
Although there is no robot in the original short story, Nayfack instructed Hume to make Robby a key element of his script. To comply, Hume has Timmy (Richard Eyer) find Robby in a pile of rusty junk sitting in a dusty storeroom, the forgotten relic of some late scientist's experiments with time travel. The dialogue wryly suggests that Robby was brought back from the Chicago Spaceport of March 16, 2309 A.D., providing a tenuous link with FORBIDDEN PLANET. Once Timmy is turned into a scientific genius by his father's supercomputer, he soon has the old veteran of Altair IV walking around, good as new.













The computer is not benign as in the original story, and uses Robby in a plot to take over an experimental Army rocket armed with nuclear warheads. However, Robby is still governed by the three laws of robotics which prevent him from harming humans, especially cute freckle-faced boys, and in the end saves the world by smashing the supercomputer's feedback apparatus.

Nayfack hired Merril Pye, a fellow ex-MGM employee, as production designer on the film, and Pye utilized the staff and equipment of Remington Rand and Radiophone Company to put together the computer set on 18,000 square feet of stage space at Samuel Goldwyn Studios at the cost of $75,000. "Our shooting schedule was for 28 days, period," remembered Hoffman. "We used very few opticals and no miniatures. To film Timmy's invisibility I used mainly 'jump cuts.' We weren't trying to sell THE INVISIBLE BOY for its effects. We were making a relatively simple little story. All it really had was Merril Pye's wonderful computer and Robby. In fact, the only spectacular scene in the whole film was when Robby attacked a Nike base, and all we had then were seventy-five extras and a flame thrower."

Hoffman remembered a tense moment near the end of shooting, when Robby the Robot had an accident. "We had Frankie Darro doing Robby and he had had a few drinks for lunch that day. And he started getting a little wobbly. Before he put his head on, I briefed him on where I wanted to go, then I returned to the camera and began shooting. Darro took three steps and fell right on his ass. It was a horrible moment. You could hear glass shattering, and all of his electrical gear shorting out. His arm twisted under him and his head twisted out of its fixture. We stopped the cameras and got the electronics expert over on the double. He set up a long table and we laid Robby out. It was a regular operation and we didn't know whether he would be fixed or not. Robby was a pretty damned important part of our production. Nicky was a mental wreck. I remember he had a nine-year-old son at the time, and Nicky eventually came up to me and said, 'You know, if my son was on that table, I couldn't be more worried!' A few hours later, the electrician operated successfully, refitting Robby with new parts, and shooting was resumed. We had lost four hours, but it had seemed like an eternity."

THE INVISIBLE BOY was released at the end of 1957, about a year-and-a-half after the release of FORBIDDEN PLANET. MGM found little in the finished product to promote, and simply dumped it on the market, where it failed to turn a profit even on its modest production investment. After Robby's cheap exploitation, a further feature film career was out of the question. The robot was consigned to the MGM prop department, where he was occasionally retrieved for use on television. Robby appeared in episodes of THE THIN MAN, THE GALE STORM SHOW, HAZEL, THE TWILIGHT ZONE (two episodes), THE AFFAIRS OF DOBIE GILLIS, LOST IN SPACE (two episodes; one, "War of the Robots," pitted Robby against the series' robot, designed by Bob Kinoshita, the MGM draftsman who drew-up the original plans for Robby), and THE ADDAMS FAMILY. In 1971, MGM sold Robby to Movie World in Buena Park, California, where he appears on display in his retirement. In 1972, special effects technician Bill Malone constructed two exact replicas of Robby from the original MGM blueprints, and continued his show business career with television appearances on COLUMBO, ARK II, SPACE ACADEMY and PROJECT UFO. In an episode of WONDER WOMAN and in New World Pictures' HOLLYWOOD BOULEVARD, Robby played "himself," now the world-renowned robot star of film and television.

Right: MGM effectsman Eddie Fisher suits-up for Robby's appearance on THE GALE STORM SHOW in the late fifties. MGM technicians Frank McKenna (left), Ray Scott (right) and a Hal Roach Studio crewmember help out. Inset: Robby and the man inside pose with Gale Storm during shooting. Left: Robby appeared with Rod Serling (top) and Richard Deacon (bottom) in two episodes of THE TWILIGHT ZONE, where he was played by effectsman Dion Hansen. The show, produced by MGM, featured other props from FORBIDDEN PLANET, including the 20" saucer model (middle) which was painted over for reuse.

Although FORBIDDEN PLANET failed commercially to be strong enough to change the direction or upgrade the quality of the science fiction genre in 1956, it nevertheless was an important first step because it set a new standard of excellence which pointed the way. STAR TREK popularized its theme, Earthmen among a federation of planets exploring the universe, without ever matching the quality of its production design, sets and special effects on a television budget. And while STAR WARS popularized robots as never before, neither R2D2 nor C3P0 even approach the elegance of design, functional simplicity, and imaginative detail found in Robby, the original "droid." The concept of Robby firmly established the theme of the humanized machine in films and its potential for humor, which the "droids" of STAR WARS only carried to the extreme of outright burlesk. And no film has ever depicted the towering grandeur of an alien civilization to match the wonders of the Krell, although 20th Century-Fox's forthcoming release of ALIEN this year will make the attempt. But FORBIDDEN PLANET was there first, and most of what passes for the science fiction film boom today is in its debt.

It is sad that in order to discover the film today viewers must rely on telecasts where its image, scope and quality of sound are reduced to the most mundane proportions. If you have seen FORBIDDEN PLANET only on television, then you haven't really seen it. But you'll have another chance this year, when the film is rereleased theatrically by Entertainment Marketing Corporation, a New York-based company which recently acquired it for distribution among MGM's package of 39 features known as the Children's Library of Classic Films. This will have to do until MGM recognizes the film's real potential as a classic that is to science fiction what the same studio's perennial favorite THE WIZARD OF OZ is to fantasy. If MGM would strike brand new 70mm prints, restoring the film's original stereophonic sound, and launch a major rerelease, filmgoers would respond as they never could in 1956, and FORBIDDEN PLANET would at last reap the boxoffice rewards of an audience it helped to create. □



REVIEWS

MAGIC

". . .even figuratively the film seldom captures any kind of magic. . ."

MAGIC A 20th Century-Fox Release. 11/78. In DeLuxe color. 106 minutes. Produced by Joseph E. Levine. Directed by Richard Attenborough. Screenplay by William Goldman, based on his novel. Director of Photography, Victor J. Kemper. Editor, John Bloom. Production Designer, Terence Marsh. Art Director, Richard Lawrence. Music by Jerry Goldsmith.

Corky/Fats. . . Anthony Hopkins
Peggy Ann Snow . . Ann-Margret
Ben Greene . . Burgess Mededith
Duke Ed Lauter
Merlin E. J. Andre
Cab Driver Jerry Houser
Todson David Ogden Stiers

"Everyone wants to believe in magic," says Anthony Hopkins in another moment of hackneyed truth during the movie MAGIC.

But both literally and figuratively there is little movie magic in this tale of a magician-ventriloquist played by Hopkins who, on the verge of "making it big," (here that translates as moving up from *The Johnny Carson Show*), escapes from the Babylonian promise of New York to the haunts of his youth and his own interior terrors. Literally, then, "magic" in his less than sparkling repetoire amounts to little more than card tricks until he adds to his act a 16-pound dummy named Fats, what Burgess Meredith as the effete Semitic agent Ben Greene leeringly describes as "the first X-rated dummy on the block" (an honor, by the way, hardly peculiar to this kind of dummy alone). And from there on out the only magic this otherwise timidly dull magician displays is a growing ability to infuse his grotesquely chiseled Hyde-like counterpart with a life of its own. One wonders even with Fats' passion for profanity how Hopkins' retiring character ever manages to make it as far as he does in a media-mad world where the tricks of ventriloquism have gone the way of Ed Sullivan and wooden Indians.

Of course veteran novelist and screenwriter William Goldman, whose impressive credits range from the richly effective novel *Boys and Girls Together* to the critically underrated film THE GREAT WALDO PEPPER, intends the word "magic" to mean a good deal more in this adaptation of his own bestselling novel. The character of Corky as interpreted by Hopkins seeks, for instance, the magic of love he had in his youth when, as we see in skillfully orchestrated flashbacks as cab driver Jerry Houser (SUMMER OF '42) takes him out to the Catskills, he lost his father to death and Peggy Ann Snow (Ann-Margret) to down-and-out drunken rival Duke (Ed Lauter). As not much more than an aging cheerleader turned owner of a failed lake resort, Ann-Margret's character likewise seeks that same lost magic when Hopkins, in a flash of *Lake Isle of Innisfree* madness that most of us have outgrown by now, proposes that they run off together.

But even figuratively the film seldom captures that kind of magic or any other. One of the problems is not so much that Goldman has selected a profession made obsolete by our more technologically sophistiacted (substitute "spoiled") audiences, but that he has dramatized a very old idea that has been done much better before. Fictionally, writers like Ray Bradbury in *And So Died Riabouchinska* and, more notably, Robert Bloch in *Final Performance* have already toyed with the gimmick of wooden alter egos for split personalities. And, of course, Bloch's own *Psycho* translated into the classic Hitchcock film treats the concept much more effectively through something a good deal more chillingly real than mere ventriloquism.

While PSYCHO was slickly directed into a narrow but taut psychological thriller, MAGIC founders, secondly, because it is much more diffuse. Not that MAGIC isn't ambitiously psychological itself, especially for film. But despite the tense and intense interior dialogues Hopkins holds with Fats, the movie never really explores in depth what Goldman apparently intended to be a very complex character. From the very first sequence, Goldman sets up that reserved versus violent inner conflict in his main character later more concretely manifest in his interreaction with the dummy. In a neatly voiced-over flashback, Hopkins relates to his dying mentor Merlin (E. J. Andre) that first stage experience when he nervously but correctly performs before a bored barroom crowd, then suddenly villifies them for their indifference with invectives we never hear except through the coarsely witty lips of his dummy that he adds later. But given that drive for recognition, we never really understand why Hopkins should fear success or why, for that matter, he should seek refuge in his past. Did the frustrated love for his father or Peggy Ann Snow, for instance, drive him to become a man so divided against himself. Either would be too simplistic. Those silent tableaus from his youth are not enough by themselves.

But in the last half of the movie, psychology loses out to a schizophrenic blend of love and suspense, disturbingly reminiscent of the embarrassing EYES OF LAURA MARS. And while its suspenseful moments, however contrived, are certainly more successful than the maudlin ones, MAGIC by that point can never levitate above a stereotyped story about one more cracked nut hemmed in by a corny triangle amid the predictable murders. Goldman demonstrated similar difficulties in THE MARATHON MAN, which likewise ended up running the gauntlet of superficial suspense with stock figures as hollow as Fats. (And, incidentally, why "Fats"? In a tale where words like "magic" or names like "Snow" resonate, Goldman here tosses in one that is painfully incongruous.

This fatal flaw is unwittingly typified by the other real-life tone deaf dummy in the publicity department at 20th Century-Fox, who thought up this jingle for all those full-page ads:

Abracadabra,
I sit on his knee.
Presto chango,
and now he is me.
Hocus Pocus,
we take her to bed.
Magic is fun;
we're dead.

Anyone who could manage such a display of talent (it does, in silly ad-man, non-sequitar shorthand feature the few high points in the film) would be better off weaving the basket in which Goldman discarded much of this script.

And yet there are occasional glimmers when Goldman, who substantiated considerable promise in this medium in the Academy Award-winning script of BUTCH CASSIDY AND THE SUNDANCE KID, indicates he has developed a keen sense for the visually dramatic. Setting the mood along the way is Victor Kemper's photography which frames the deceptively still autumnal lake setting, and Jerry Goldsmith's eerie score with that gasping harmonica motif effectively communicating the growing menace of the dummy. With the script thus enhanced, Goldman skillfully tricks us into tense apprehension. One scene seeded with red herrings occurs when Lauter and Hopkins are alone in a boat on the lake and Lauter begins reeling in a snagged fishing line with what Hopkins fears is the drowned body of the first victim. In another more ghoulish one, we see a series of nerve-wracking close-ups of Meredith's face as Hopkins tows him out to a landing before the "corpse's" eyelids flutter open and another death struggle ensues. And much later, after we watch a terrified Hopkins waiting in the hall apparently to take his lover's life as well, Goldman writes in a quick cut to a close-up of the magician's knife plunging into flesh—though not that of the one we had expected. Tricks and treats that are contrived as a creaking door, but they work. A number of the carefully staged shots by actor-director Sir Richard Attenborough featuring the eldritch expressions of the dummy only string along our growing fears in appropriate marionette fashion.

Perhaps the real surprise in the film, though, is the intensely neurotic yet sympathetic performance Attenborough draws out of Hopkins. More than just creditable, deserving of more than written accolades, Hopkins' convincing uneasiness stands in marked contrast to Ann-Margret's own uneasiness in a role which, no matter how remarkable her well-preserved beauty may be after surviving 37 years, is not part of the act. Curiously, she is only credible with her clothes off, in an obligatory bedroom scene. Meredith as the victimized Jew takes us in more easily, however briefly, but it is always Hopkins awkwardly throwing his voice but never the act at center stage.

No matter how contrived, superficial or unoriginal the story, then, MAGIC, if only for Goldman's ambitions and Hopkins' presence, is at least fitfully interesting. But Goldman must be immensely frustrated with this medium. It's with the flamboyance of a serious artist, for instance, that he again calls on the sentimental symbol of that whittled wooden heart at the end with such mechanically bitter irony.

That touch may point up that this potboiler really bubbles down to a fundamental precept known to the most expert sorcerers, whether they be writers, actors or less-obvious con-artists. Real magic is not just the sleight-of-hand trick that Hopkins admits gets him a trick of a much different sort. It is not an obvious lie, in other words, but illusion brought to life by a talent so practiced that it never calls attention to itself as mere entertaining contrivance.

So if it's this kind of magic you're looking for, be forewarned that it lies elsewhere than in MAGIC—if anyone still believes in the ultimate illusion that it lies anywhere at all. □

by Steven Dimeo

"Fats" and Corky (Anthony Hopkins).



THE LAST WAVE

". . .makes the genre's commercial blockbusters seem pathetically obvious and absurd. . ."

THE LAST WAVE A World Northal Release. 1978. In color. 106 minutes. Produced by Hal McElroy and James McElroy. Directed by Peter Weir. Screenplay by Weir, Tony Morphett and Peter Popescu, from an original idea by Weir. Director of Photography, Russell Boyd. Edited by Max Lemon. Music by Charles Wain. Special Effects by Neil Angwin and Monty Fieguth. A McElroy & McElroy Production in association with Derek Power (The South Australian Film Corporation and The Australian Film Commission).

David Richard Chamberlain
Anne Olivia Hammett
Chris Lee. David Gulpilil
Rev. Burton . . Frederick Parslow
Dr. Whitburn Vivean Gray
Charlie Nanjiwarra Amagula
Gerry Lee Walter Amagula
Larry Roy Bara



David (Richard Chamberlain) finds a mask in his own likeness with the remains of the Mulkurul civilization.

Who'd have expected an occult masterpiece from *Australia*? Yet here it is—a film made on a relatively modest scale that makes the genre's commercial blockbusters seem pathetically obvious and absurd; a work that seeps into our consciousness, planting the seeds of something more consequential than any supernatural mystery. Since we are not exactly used to being challenged by a film (in or outside the genre), to be overwhelmed by cinematic subtleties, indirection of theme, or levels of implication, it is quite acceptable to risk reading a lot into Peter Weir's film. Such as looking beyond the basic subject matter—highly effective in its own right—to see a final judgment on the world the white man made.

Aberrations of nature have been manifesting themselves. A mysterious black rain falls over Sydney, Australia. An outback town, sweltering in the heat of midsummer, is pelted by hailstones. A successful Sydney lawyer (Chamberlain) is troubled by terrifying premonitory dreams that, in their un-dreamlike versimilitude, are nearly indistinguishable from reality. He sees recurring images of water, and of a young Aborigine offering him a triangular stone inlaid with odd markings. Elements within these dreams start to become tangible when he is called upon to defend a group of city Aborigines accused to murdering one of their own. Among this group is the young man (Gulpilil) who held out the stone in his dream.

The cause of the murdered man's demise is open to question, because of what happened to the body immediately after death. The defense Chamberlain prepares is based on tribal law, and the fact of the execution by means of tribal magic (here, as with Voodoo, the belief of the *victim* may be important). Tribal law is separate from and immune to the laws of Australia; the authorities insist that no city-dwelling Aborigines are tribal. The defense finds little help in the Aborigines' essential uncooperativeness.

As events progress, Chamberlain is drawn even deeper into another world, one that has always coexisted silently with our own, but which is now, unaccountably, beginning to assert its dominance. Nature itself is the agent of this turnabout, in small steps undermining the small handiwork of man. The dreams, clearly akin to visions, begin to occur even during the day. Chamberlain sees flashes of Sydney totally submerged, as from a fish's point of view. Now giving the visions more credence, realizing time may be running out, suspecting a link between the Aborigines and these strange events, he tries to breach their sullen distrust. The tribal elder (magician) knows that the bewildered young lawyer is not just another white Australian. Seeing through the eyes of another, older culture, the elder respects the psychic gift Chamberlain cannot understand. And though as fascinated with this particular white man as Chamberlain has become with the Aborigines, he sees him, rightly, as a potential threat.

Director Peter Weir has two previous films to his credit: THE CARS THAT ATE PARIS and PICNIC AT HANGING ROCK—the latter being a triumph of arresting atmosphere and tone over an annoyingly obscure storyline. THE LAST WAVE is light-years beyond either of these. Weir's major stylistic influence (in this case) seems to be Nicholas Roeg, whose DON'T LOOK NOW quickly comes to mind. Though Weir may not be able to match the incisive brilliance of Roeg's visuals and imagery, he continually bests Roeg in matters of substantive content. Time and again he stuns us with some sharp, striking image made up of familiar elements suddenly appearing within an unexpected context—as when a miniature torrent of water gushes (in slow motion) out of a car radio; or when trees, wind and water make a selective and concerned assault on Chamberlain's house.

Clearly, Weir has no intention of telling us everything, but he is willing to *show* us enough, if we are willing to look-out for casually presented information that does not necessarily call attention to itself within the frame. Through something as simple as the gradual accretion of detail, he manages to create a haunting nether-world that, for its sustained, disturbing eerieness, far out-classes anything Hollywood can accomplish with unlimited special effects. I do not pretend to understand the means by which he has achieved the film's hypnotic texture.

THE LAST WAVE takes the position that magic definitely does exist, but the film will be damned if it's going to come right out and say so. Paradoxically, this approach fosters much greater (suspension of dis-) belief than any EXORCIST/OMEN literalism. On the down side, Chamberlain's position is central, and his performance lacks a needed intensity. Possibly this conforms to a passivity in the character as scripted, but it helps make the film overly cool and detached. And then there are the nagging unanswered questions. Chamberlain may or may not be the embodied spirit revered by the Aborigines. The menacing chain of events may or may not have been predestined. By bringing forth a cataclysm of nature, the Aborigines will take a belated revenge upon the technological civilization that has all but annihilated them; but will such action destroy just Sydney? all Australia? the World?

By implication, THE LAST WAVE speaks to the fate of "primitive" peoples everywhere. Whether we're referring to the hapless Eskimo, the deliberate, longterm eradication of the Brazilian Indians, our own vanished "first Americans," or Australian Aborigines, seems largely irrelevant. If our superior weaponry, our diseases, our hatred and greed didn't get them, our "culture" surely would have (*"Please don't squeeze the Charmin"*). Even if outside the context of *this* film, the cultural contrasts cannot be ignored. Dismiss the 'noble savage' as a romantic myth, but still, they did possess a sense of purpose in life, an essential harmony with their enviornment, and a true spirituality greatly predating the fraud of organized religion. We stripped them (their surviving remnant, that is) of their identity and their self-esteem, attempting to replace these things, by force and by neglect, with our own cultural locus. Namely, the sterile, hollow, soulless "civilization," bereft of meaning (values or goals), unless it is to be good (i.e., pliable) little consumers, and seeking nothing, except perhaps a kind of grasping, joyless hedonism. For that reason alone, if your sensibilities are so attuned, you may find yourself cheering the Aborigines as they summon up, through art and the filmmakers' imagination, a justice not obtainable in the real world.

The film's conclusion, of Chamberlain's harrowing search for a sacred cave hidden somewhere in the sewers beneath the city, ranks among the great moments of *cinefantastique*. When Chamberlain makes his egress from the sewers onto the beach, staggers a ways, looks up and sees the monstrous wall of water approaching (immediately or in premonition—it makes no difference), several hundred years of history stand in judgment: We Blew It.

THE LAST WAVE is a rewarding and unusual experience. □

by Jordan R. Fox

REVIEWS

THE INCREDIBLE TORTURE SHOW

". . .seems to have hit all the upchuck bases. . ."

THE INCREDIBLE TORTURE SHOW Rochelle Films. 1978. In color. 93 minutes. Produced by Alan C. Margolin. Written and Directed by Joel M. Reed. Director of Photography, Gerry Toll. Music by Michael Sahl. Editors, Victor Kanefsky, Valkhn Films.

Sardu Seamus O'Brien
Natasha. Viju Krem
Ralphus Louie Dejesus
Tom Niles McMaster
Women Lynette Sheldon
Karen Fraser
Michelle Craig
Doctor Ernie Peysher

The Great Sardu, prominent white slaver to the Mideast, runs a Grand Guignol-ish torture theatre well off-Broadway in Manhattan's Soho. He wants a *prime* ballerina, discontented with the New York State Theatre at Lincoln Center ("a boring procession of *Giselles*"), to dance for him, so he kidnaps her. Her boyfriend, a vacuous pro football player and star of hairspray commercials, wants her back. He goes to a New York City cop who agrees to help but only after arranging a fee of $10,000 for himself. Finally getting the goods on Sardu and raiding his theatre, the cop is eaten by a cage full of naked cannibal women who revolt, escape, and cut off the heads of everyone, including a sadistic dwarf, their keeper and Sardu's chief torturer, but not before the ballerina performs for the public, where in Sardu's original *pas de deux*, she gracefully stomps a critic for the New York Times to death.

Alas, it's better in the verbal telling of it; this is a gross gore cum sex movie written and directed by Joel M. Reed and filmed on half a shoestring in what looks like his apartment building's basement. There's a certain anti-critical, anti-intellectual coyness at work here, as Sardu, joyfully played by Seamus O'Brien, in the beginning addresses the film audience as much as the audience gathered on screen to watch his stage show, which thus pretty well equates the movie we're watching: re the bloody violence, "If you're bored by it, pretend it's real, but if you're excited by it, pretend it's fake." There's something, too, in the fact that the Times critic, played as a broad parody of Clive Barnes, would attend such a performance, in the name of Art or whatever, just as I was sitting in an unreassuring, sticky-floored theatre taking in this movie. Reed manages an early Sadean glee in the bloodletting, as in Grand Guignol theatre, and the film is full of the kind of whacked-out details that Reed habitually includes in his movies, mostly for the benefit of New Yorkers who probably never come out to see them anyway.

However, the movie is soon submerged by the cumulative effect of constant buckets of gore and animal innards, and Reed certainly seems to have hit all the upchuck bases here. The low (or high) point of it is a bit of neurosurgery performed with a ¼" electric drill after which the giggly-mad doctor sucks up the victim's brains through a straw, all shot by Reed in steady close-up.

The trickery is, by and large, extremely rudimentary and transparent, which accentuates the biggest problem I have with gore films, in that after a while I begin to feel sorry and ashamed for the actors on screen and the mess they have to go through for their most-times non-SAG pay. One item keeping me in my seat for the duration (apart from the stickyness of an unknown substance) was O'Brien as Sardu. Whether devising new tortures, or making love to the dead Times critic (a want-to-be-appreciated Freudian slip for Reed?), O'Brien is morbidly delightful in a cheerfully fruity, self-effacing kind of way, reminiscent of Roberts Blossom in DERANGED. □

by David Bartholomew

George Hamilton as Dracula.



LOVE AT FIRST BITE

". . .tries desperately to create a momentum that never materializes."

LOVE AT FIRST BITE An American International Pictures Release. 4/79. 90 minutes. In color. Produced by Joel Freeman. Executive Producers, Robert Kaufman and George Hamilton. Directed by Stan Dragoti. Screenplay by Robert Kaufman, from a story by Kaufman and Mark Gindes. Director of Photography, Edward Rossen. Edited by Mort Fallick. Art director, Serge Krizman. Production Manager, Bill Badalato. The Count's Wardrobe by Dubhill Tailors. First Assistant directors, Don Zepfel, Marty Berman. Make-up by William Tuttle.

Dracula. George Hamilton
Cindy. Susan St. James
Jeff Richard Benjamin
Lt. Ferguson. Dick Shawn
Renfield Arte Johnson
Judge Isabel Sanford

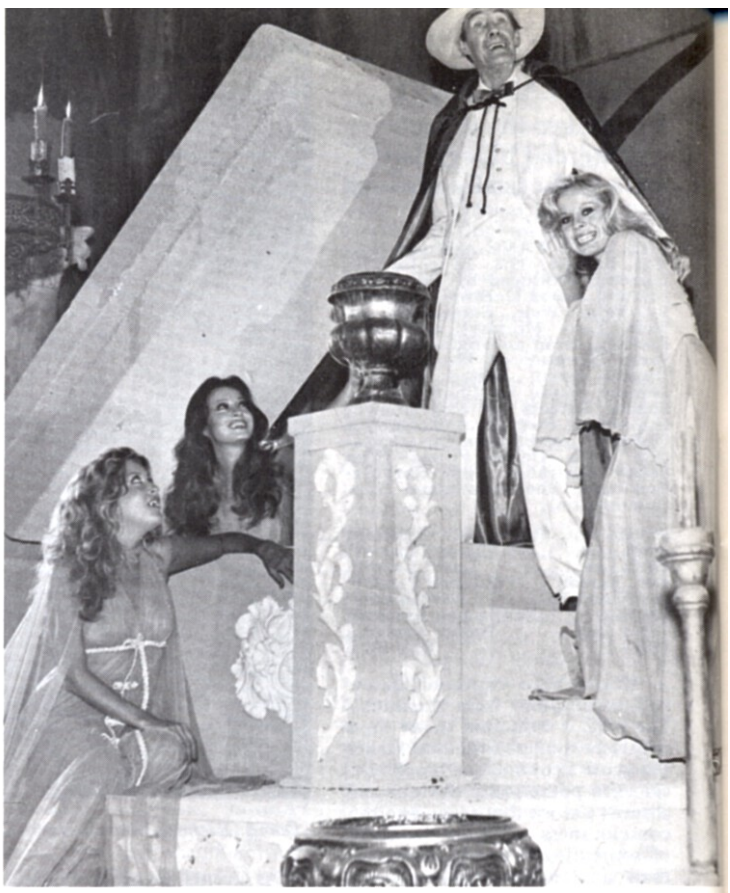
While Frank Langella is busy readying his fangs to play Dracula in the screen adaptation of the hit Broadway play, the Mel Simon organization has quietly upstaged his entrance by releasing this low-budget romantic farce with suave George Hamilton as the irrepressable Gothic bloodsucker.

Writer-producer Robert Kaufman has updated the classic vampire legend to present-day New York, where the Count journeys (via coffin, of course) to win the heart—and the blood that it pumps—of his dream cover girl, Susan St. James. Will the Prince of Darkness administer another deadly hickey? Almost-fiancee Richard Benjamin joins forces with police lieutenant Dick Shawn (wasted in what is more like an extended cameo) to insure St. James doesn't succumb to Hamilton's Transylvanian charms.

Kaufman has mentioned that the movie's first draft was called DRACULA SUCKS AGAIN, a much more appropriate title considering the obviousness of the gags and situations here. Not that some of them aren't funny. Benjamin's floundering attempts to destroy Dracula with such items as a Star of David and a round of silver bullets provides some laughs, as does St. James' delightful performance as a pill-popping fashion model.

The major problem with the film is one of overkill. After an hour the puns become stale and the script degenerates into a series of shopworn sixties movie cliches (power blackouts, car chases) that try desperately to create a momentum that never materializes. Director Dragoti does a serviceable job as long as there are only two actors in a scene, but his staging of the climactic action scenes betray his amateurishness and lack of committment to the flimsy material. □

by Kyle Counts



John Carradine and his toothy ladies of the night.

VAMPIRE HOOKERS

". . .so dull that the movie can only be set up as a lampoon."

VAMPIRE HOOKERS A Capricorn Three Films Release. 2/79. In color. 93 minutes. Produced by Robert E. Waters. Directed by Cirio H. Santiago. Screenplay by Howard Cohen. Music by Jaime Mendoza. Liason Producer, Jerome J. Zanitsch. Assistant Director, Leo Martinez. Postproduction Supervisor, Emmett R. Alston.

With: John Carradine, Bruce Fairbairn, Trey Wilson, Karen Stride, Tiffany K. Neipe, Lenka Novak, Katie Dolan, Lex Winter, Erma Martin Bauman.

Two sailors hungry for action are propositioned by two sultry babes, who lead the boys through a cemetary, a masoleum, and down a staircase. . .where John Carradine awaits. The girls are all vampires, see, and for centuries Carradine has been sending them up to lure men whose blood can be drained and drunk from goblets. Like most modern vampire movies, this one's plot is so dull that the movie can only be set up as a lampoon. Director Santiago is the most prolific of the current Filipino exploitation filmmakers, but his approach is totally pedestrian. There is one desultory bondage sequence, but otherwise very little nudity and no violence. The sets are decent, and the photography is crisp, so at least the movie's not hard to look at—but not even Carradine, whose scenes look like they were shot in a day or two, can keep it from being a crashing bore. The level of humor is appalling. □

by Bill Kelley

REVIEWS

INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS

". . .is no pod-like duplicate of the original."

INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS A United Artists Release. 12/78. 114 minutes. In color. Produced by Robert H. Solo. Directed by Philip Kaufman. Written by W. D. Richter, based on the novel "The Body Snatchers" by Jack Finney. Director of Photography, Michael Chapman. Production Designer, Charles Rosen. Edited by Douglas Stewart. Music by Denny Zeitlin. Make-up Effects Created by Thomas Burman and Edouard Henriques. Special Effects by Dell Rheaume and Russ Hessey. Special Sound Effects Created by Ben Burtt. Space Sequence by Ron Dexter & Howard Preston. Assistant Director, Jim Bloom.

Bennell Donald Sutherland
Elizabeth. Brooke Adams
David Kibner . . Leonard Nimoy
Nancy. Veronica Cartwright
Jack Bellicec. . . . Jeff Goldblum
Geoffrey Art Hindle
Katherine Leila Goldoni
Running Man . . Kevin McCarthy
Taxi Driver. Don Siegel
Ted Hendley. Tom Luddy
Stan. Stan Richie
Priest Robert Duvall

About thirty minutes into Philip Kaufman's new INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS, Matthew (Donald Sutherland) and Elizabeth (Brooke Adams) are driving down the streets of San Francisco. Odd things have been happening over the past few days: bright red flowers, apparently a new species, have blossomed throughout the city; Elizabeth is convinced that Geoffrey, her lover, is no longer Geoffrey; a Chinese launderer has confided to Matthew that his wife is not in fact his wife. As the two share their misgivings at a stoplight a body suddenly splatters itself across their windshield, yelling, "They're coming, they're coming!"—and by God, it's Kevin McCarthy, hero of Don Siegel's original film.

It is a witty and affecting moment, this tribute sent by Kaufman across two decades to the classic source film. Moreover, this new BODY SNATCHERS is no pod-like duplicate of the original. It is a very carefully crafted picture, graced with a richness of texture, of detail, that the first film, given its limited budget, could hardly hope to match. Kaufman's visual strategy is based upon camera set-ups that subordinate the characters to an increasingly menacing urban enviornment, consistently relegated to the edges of the frame or the rear of the frame while non-human objects—walls, machines, flowers, shadows—gradually dominate the screen space.

In addition, the film as a whole is structured around a less obvious tactic. It slowly, methodically eliminates all daytime exteriors, so that the picture's final third seems to exist solely in a night world populated by pods and phantoms, and eerie blend of the horror genre and *film noir*. The very last sequence reverts to daylight, but it is filmed under a grey, lowering sky—a far cry from the bright, candy-color park in which the film proper begins.

by Paul Petlewski

These devices, plus a quick, nervous rhythm of editing create an automatic uneasiness in the viewer. BODY SNATCHERS, with its fragmented filmic world, doesn't look like conventional *cinefantastique*; it looks as though Richard Lester had been turned loose on a horror film. And one more factor, a Dolby stereo track which is one of the busiest in film history, and you have the makings of a genuine nightmare.

Yet the baroque visual stylization of the film, obviously done with real thought and care, eventually exacts a price. The first BODY SNATCHERS derived a great deal of its power precisely from the flat, conventional photography that marked its first half, for it trapped the viewer in what amounted to a suspenseful dialectic. A woman might complain that her brother wasn't her brother, but everything else in the film, *essentially* its routine, documentary-like visuals, worked to suggest the exact opposite—that the small town was in fact quite ordinary and commonplace.

This conceptual tension—the initial possibility that people really are imagining things—is missing from the Kaufman film. In this version there is no room for doubt: Geoffrey, the first victim, acts like a zombie, his close-ups accompanied by ominous shadows and electronic shudders on the sound track. One of Finney's cleverest ideas is thus thrown away (as it was, to a lesser extent, in the first version)—that the pods are *absolutely* normal on the surface, that they smile and laugh and behave like real people rather than refugees from NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD. At least Siegel's film sustained a high level of suspense because the audience never knew more than its doctor-hero; in this version, with it periodic cinematic nudging, the audience is way ahead of everyone in the cast.

It is fair to say that the new BODY SNATCHERS is more frightening at isolated moments. It contains a number of quick, jolting scenes—a shot where blood suddenly courses from the right nostril of Jack Bellicec's duplicate, the shots of Matthew's pod as it begins quivering, then writhing into life, a demonic parody of birth. And later on there is a bit with a dog that should produce startled double-takes from every member of the audience. Moreover—an unexpected bonus—the special effects are remarkable. The scene when Elizabeth begins to crumble in Matthew's arms is a technical marvel, arguably the most convincing disintegration ever put on film. But, finally, the original picture generated a more sustained suspense. And I think it goes deeper.

Put simply, the Siegel film has more real pain in it, more emotional pain. Kaufman's film is a non-stop nightmare from frame one (it begins as the pods start their journey towards Earth). But Siegel's version can't be written off as a bad dream; it seems to *slide*, very gradually, into nightmare, for it is filled with odd touches of domesticity—a mother going to place a pod beside the crib of her sleeping child. And the first film builds steadily towards one of the few honestly great single shots in horror film history: the huge close-up, stretching across the entire scope screen, of Dana Wynter opening her black, beautiful, dead eyes staring up at the camera. Nothing in the Kaufman film, despite its dedication and occasional art, is able to capture the horror and sadness of the moment: the death of love in a minute of sleep.

This said, Kaufman's version is an important film, an honorable variation on the theme. The young director still seems a bit uneasy with spectacle—the crowd scenes are indifferently staged and the one big (and expendable) action sequence, when Matthew destroys a nursey of pods, is shot like an efficient TV movie, without any real urgency. But otherwise the direction is masterful; the final moments of this film pack a real punch, uniting a series of elegaic visuals, a mournful echo of "Amazing Grace," and a climactic shock effect that really shocks, like the hand snaking from the grave in CARRIE. Finally, he has elicited two performances of real stature: Donald Sutherland's energetic, sensible hero and, especially, Veronica Cartwright as the most vulnerable of the quartet—frail, warm, appealing, looking like the last of the flower-children in a city of the dead. □

COUNT DRACULA AND HIS VAMPIRE BRIDES

"It is hardly the best of the series, but it is far from the worst. . ."

COUNT DRACULA AND HIS VAMPIRE BRIDES A Dynamite Entertainment Release. 11/78. In color. 87 minutes. Produced and directed by Alan Gibson. Screenplay by Don Houghton. Director of Photography, Brian Probyn. Art director, Lionel Couch. Music by John Cacavas.

Count Dracula. . Christopher Lee
Van Helsing Peter Cushing
Murray Michael Coles
Torrence William Franklyn
Jessica Joanna Lumley
Prof. Keeley Freddie Jones
Mathews Richard Vernon
Carradine. Patrick Barr

THE SATANIC RITES OF DRACULA, the final entry in Hammer Films' series of Christopher Lee Dracula films, made in 1973 and shelved by Warner Brothers, has finally appeared, albeit under the lamentably cheesy title of COUNT DRACULA AND HIS VAMPIRE BRIDES. The film is a pleasant surprise. It is hardly the best of the series, but it is far from the worst. In this outing, Dracula is revived to serve the purposes of a neo-militarist cadre of spies/scientists planning to spread a new form of bubonic plague throughout the world.

by David Bartholomew

Christopher Lee's Dracula is impaled on the Hawthorne bush.





Killer tomatoes attack JAWS fashion.

ATTACK OF THE KILLER TOMATOES

"In a film that attempts to be bad, is it right to blame anyone if it succeeds?"

ATTACK OF THE KILLER TOMATOES An NAI Entertainment Release. 12/78. 90 minutes. In color. Produced by Steve Peace & John DeBello. Directed by DeBello. Screenplay by C. J. Dillon, Steve Peace and DeBello. Special Effects by Robert Mapzenaur and Craig Berkos.

Mason Dixon David Miller
Jim Richardson . . George Wilson
Lois Fairchild . . . Sharon Taylor
Agriculture Officer . . Jack Riley
Polk. Eric Christmas

ATTACK OF THE KILLER TOMATOES is an affectionate spoof with some very clever moments. The plot is basic: for no apparent reason, tomatoes begin wreaking havoc and destruction. They pop out of sinks, disguise themselves as breakfast drinks and even, in a caustic takeoff on JAWS 2, attack from underwater. They also grow in size, alarming the military and calling special agent Mason Dixon and his bizarre task force into action. A killer tomato the size of a basketball is captured, chained and held at gunpoint as a doctor examines it. "Gentlemen," he says, lowering his stethoscope, "our worst fears have been realized. This, may God help us, is a cherry tomato."

And so the fight begins in earnest, with giant tomatoes rolling down tacky miniatures of city streets, and with an eventual HIGH NOON showdown at San Diego stadium. In one scene, one of Dixon's cohorts infiltrates the enemy camp disguised as a giant killer tomato. He is welcomed by them, and even attends their campfire barbeque, but makes the fatal mistake of asking one of the killer tomatoes to pass the ketchup. In another segment, the presidential press secretary goes to an advertising agency to help "stem" the impending tomato panic. The ad man comes up with a brilliant and reassuring campaign: "Tomato Plants vs. Nuclear Plants." The plot doesn't hold up well for its 90 minutes, but there are more genuine laughs here than in any Mel Brooks film.

DeBello's direction hints at an affinity for low budget monster films, especially cheap Japanese imports and low-budget American disasters. In a military conference room everyone speaks perfect English but a Japanese doctor, whose dialogue is overdubbed with a deep American voice. When Dixon discovers that the killer tomatoes are vulnerable to bad music, it recalls all the dozens of horror films whose monsters, space invaders and natural disasters were all equipped with handy Achilles' heels.

Most of the special effects are horrible, but that's part of the fun. The stop-action animation is sloppy—the giant tomatoes look like immense escapees from a wax centerpiece. One effect, however, is jarringly convincing: a helicopter attempting to land outside a tomato patch spins five times and crashes. It's the most realistic helicopter crash ever committed to film, mainly because the crash is real. The three men inside escaped before the copter burst into flames, and dialogue was added later to blame the crash on a flying killer tomato. Director DeBello blames the accident on a freak wind ("It worked fine during rehearsal," he shrugs).

The best performances come from George Wilson as the mock-sincere press secretary and Costa Dillon as a student who clears a crowded library by whispering the word, "tomato." The rest of the acting ranges from excusable to deplorable. The music, except for *The Theme from ATTACK OF THE KILLER TOMATOES*, is equally forgettable, but in a film that attempts to be bad, is it right to blame anyone if it succeeds? □

by David Bianculli

GODZILLA ON MONSTER ISLAND

"It's impossible to think of a way this series could be worsened. . ."

GODZILLA ON MONSTER ISLAND A Cinema Shares/Downtown Distributing Co. Release. 1/78(72). 80(89) minutes. In Fujicolor and Tohoscope. Produced by Tomoyuki Tanaka (Toho International Film Co.). Directed by Jun Fukuda. Screenplay by Shinichi Sekizawa. Director of Photography, Kiyoshi Hasegawa. Art director, Yoshihumi Honda. Music by Akira Ifukube. Special Effects Director, Akiyoshi Nakano.

Godzilla Haruo Nakajima
Gigan Kengu Nakayama
Ghidrah Kanta Ina
Anguilas Koetsu Omiya
with Hiroshi Ishikawa, Minoru Takashima, Tomoko Umeda, Kunio Murai, Yuriko Hishimi.

It is difficult to decide which is more boring in the GODZILLA series: the long, dull introductory section where the plot is set up; or the long, dull ending where Godzilla fights the guest monster(s). It is also hard to see why the American distributor titled the film GODZILLA ON MONSTER ISLAND as it takes place mainly in a children's amusement park, complete with an office building the size and shape of Godzilla, somewhere in Japan proper.

Such plot as there is involves extraterrestrial roaches who wear

by Judith P. Harris

SOMEONE IS WATCHING ME

". . .builds an atmosphere of unexpectancy and dread. . ."

SOMEONE IS WATCHING ME A segment of NBC-TV Wednesday Night at the Movies. 11/22/78. In color. 120 minutes. Executive Producer, Robert Kobritz. Written and directed by John Carpenter. Director of Photography, Robert Hauser. Edited by Jerry Taylor. Art director, Phil Barber. Music by Harry Sukman. Filmed on Los Angeles locations and at the Burbank Studios of Warner Brothers Television.

Leigh Michaels. . .Lauren Hutton
Sophie Adrienne Barbeau
With: David Birney, Charles Cyphers, Grainger Hines, Len Lesser, Angus Kompuck, Chino Rivera, John Mahon, James Murtaugh.

John Carpenter is turning into a director to watch. SOMEONE IS WATCHING ME has a good amount of style going for it. It's full of tight, taut little touches that raise it above the made-for-TV movie level and also builds an atmosphere of unexpectancy and dread that (and this is what makes Carpenter worth watching) is actually *sustained* throughout the drama.

As a writer, Carpenter is not terribly original; he borrows bits and pieces of his storylines from a variety of sources. SOMEONE'S WATCHING ME owes practically everything in it to Hitchcock's REAR WINDOW, but Carpenter still succeeds in springing a few surprises of his own.

Hutton stars as Leigh Michaels, a young woman who has moved to the big city to get away from a love affair that has gone sour. She moves into the apartment of her dreams, a multi-windowed affair that allows her a view of everyone in the surrounding complexes. Unfortunately, it also allows everyone else a view of her—in particular a peeping Tom with a

by John McCarty

Godzilla and Gigan.

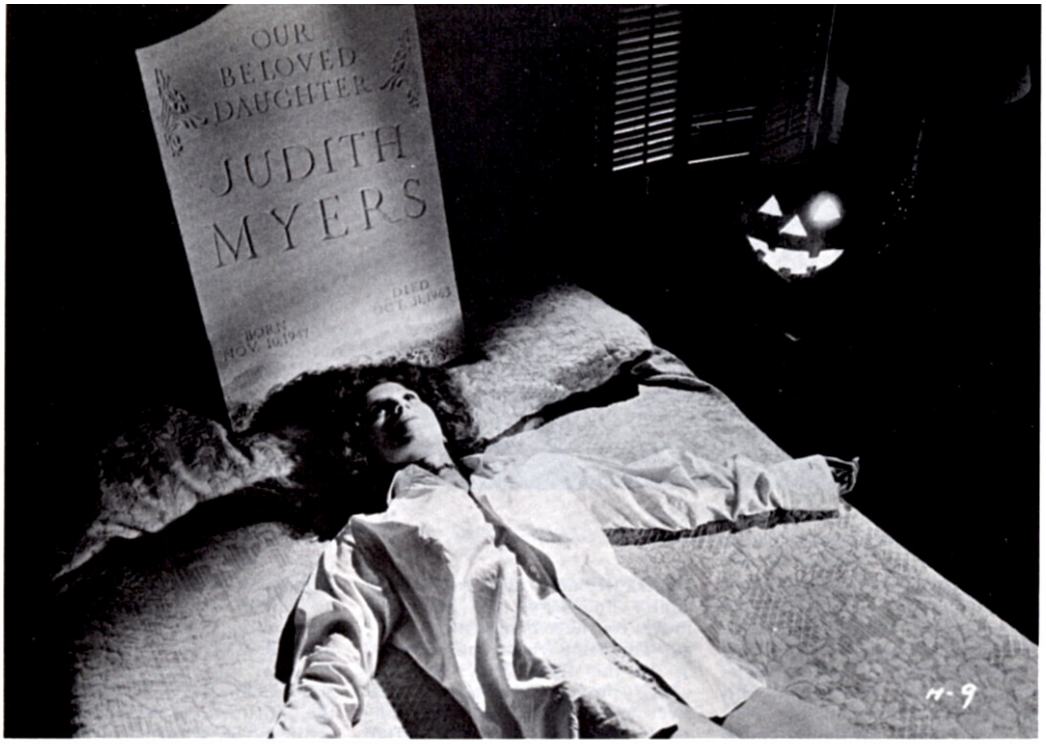


telescope and a tape recorder (he has bugged her apartment), who proceeds to launch an attack of weird letters, mysterious, heavy-breathing phone calls, strange "gifts," and other irritants guaranteed to drive her to an eventual breakdown. But Leigh refuses to be intimidated, telling a friend that she's used to being hassled by men, so she's not going to let a crank get the better of her. As a result of this bravado, she does more dumb things to endanger her life than practically any heroine in movie history. Yet it's all somehow very plausible under Carpenter's direction.

One scene in the film Carpenter borrows wholly from REAR WINDOW. Leigh, after discovering that her nemesis is watching her from an apartment almost across the way, stations her friend (Adrienne Barbeau) at the telescope in her own apartment and, equipped with a walkie-talkie so the pair can communicate, ventures across the way to the peeper's apartment to investigate. After milking Leigh's shadowy tour of the apartment for as much suspense as possible, Carpenter has her look through the peeper's telescope back into her own apartment and to her (and our) surprise she sees Barbeau being assaulted by the phantom peeper. Where Hitchcock gave us a full dose of suspense, Carpenter gives us that plus a surprise Sunday punch, and yet he never forsakes his model, REAR WINDOW. The whole scene is great fun, and it works. It is a true *hommage* without being a mere shallow imitation. On the whole, though, SOMEONE IS WATCHING ME is no REAR WINDOW. Except for Leigh, most of the characters are thinly drawn. And Lauren Hutton leaves much to be desired—except in the way of looks, which are quite striking indeed. Still, the film does succeed on its own much more modest terms as a thriller. □

natty orange jackets in their human guise. They plan to take over Earth by means of two space monsters: the three-headed dragon Ghidrah, and the somewhat metalicized Gigan, equipped with a buzz-saw in his abdomen. Impossible as it is to think of a way this series could be worsened, it has actually been achieved in having Godzilla and another monster called Anguilas converse with each other in English. The makers and distributors aren't taking any chances that anything may go over the heads of their sub-teen target audience. Likewise, heroes and villains alike are teenagers, thereby strengthening audience identification. If you are a fantasy completist, you'll sit through anything; everyone else will avoid this film anyway.

The film's music, by Akira Ifukube, consists entirely of stock themes lifted from other GODZILLA movies, and this otherwise inauspicious feature marked the final performance by Haruo Nakajima as Godzilla. He had played the monster in every previous film since the original, except SON OF GODZILLA (1968). □



No trick or treat for Nancy Loomis, victim on Hallowe'en.

HALLOWEEN

". . .is consistent only in its formula build-ups to knee-jerk scares. . ."

HALLOWEEN A Compass International Release. 11/78. In Metrocolor and Panavision. 93 minutes. Produced by Debra Hill. Executive Producer, Irwin Yablans. Directed by John Carpenter. Screenplay by Carpenter and Debra Hill. Director of Photography, Dean Lundey. Music composed by John Carpenter. Editors, Tommy Wallace and Charles Burnstein. Production Designer, Tommy Wallace. Assistant Director, Rick Wallace. Set Decoration, Craig Stearns. Make-up by Erica Ulland. Production Assistants, Barry Bernardi & Paul Fox.

Loomis Donald Pleasence
Laurie Jamie Lee Curtis
Annie. Nancy Loomis
Lynda P. J. Soles
Brackett Charles Cyphers
Lindsey. Kyle Richards
The Shape Nick Moran

For children, the mindless horror of the "boogeyman" concept lies in their fear of realiable adult minds abruptly dipping into instability and malice—like the ogre Daddy becomes after a tipple too many. The malevolence is frightening because it is indiscriminate, unpredictable, and worst of all, inevitable. The boogeyman does not need a reason to "get you"—if you're not careful, he *will*.

Confronting children with such a realization of their worst fears, made possible by a supernatural context, is an idea worthy of Val Lewton, but unfortunately, John Carpenter can't decide whether he is dealing with a *real* boogeyman or a wind-up maniac in HALLOWEEN (no apostrophe). The boogeyman notion is raised midfilm by a fleeting snatch of dialogue, then relegated to left field until the final seconds of the film—which is the problem, since it is the only focus for a narrative riddled with cheap, reflexive shocks amid incoherent action. Boogeys leaping from unexpected quarters of the screen have nothing to do with the true anatomy of horror.

Michael warms up for his Hallowe'en gore fest by stalking Laurie (Jamie Lee Curtis, Janet Leigh's daughter) and an arbitrary group of her babysitting, high school friends. The girls cannot perceive Michael pacing them in broad daylight, even though he's piloting a stolen institutional car and wearing a rubber mask that looks like a Don Post version of Leatherface. Naturally the police never get within a mile of him, possibly because their chief is so inept he can't even detect his own daughter smoking pot in the family car. At this point, the town has already been warned of Michael's coming, yet his eventual victims are so callow and blind to danger that they deserve to get carved. Laurie is saved for an explicit finale while her friends drop around her. Their deaths, though conceptually attractive, are dull in execution and hampered by what seems to be an inverted gore film cliche—namely, the soundtrack volume decreases claustrophobically while they (all in requisite states of near-nudity) get the blade.

By contrast, the children, the babysittees, are never directly menaced by the knife-wielding spectre. This would imply that those who honestly fear a boogeyman are more keenly aware of his presence, making him more or less ethereal. Loomis (Donald Pleasence, in a tepid role as the film's compulsory psychiatrist) contradicts this notion by the simple fact that he has had Michael locked up in a cell for 15 years! Further, his tangential remarks concerning the "evil" and the "devil" behind Michael's blank stare generate misleading religious vibes that are thankfully abandoned, after leading us to believe Loomis is also crazy.

Hallowe'en is traditionally a night during which the dead rise to frolic on Earth, and although Laurie dispatches him thrice, Rubberface rises with a comic NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD persistence to stalk her anew. She resourcefully jams him in the throat, eye, and face with a knitting needle, coathanger, and his own knife respectively, after which Loomis arrives and puts five slugs into him that propel him off the second-story balcony. The thin boogeyman motif allows Michael to waltz off yet another time, in a resolution-less "twist" ending reminiscent of Dan Curtis at his worst.

HALLOWEEN is at times deceptively slick—not all drive-in shriekers are filmed in Panavision—and because Carpenter accrues the lion's share of film credit (plus the mantle "A John Carpenter Film"), the blame for shortcomings must also lie at his feet. Though he is not beyond a joke (the *Dark Star* paperback seen on a nightstand) or a contrived *hommage* (the unrelenting clips from FORBIDDEN PLANET and THE THING seen on television—on Hallowe'en?), or even a set-up that plays excellently on audience expectations (Annie in the laundry room), HALLOWEEN is consistent only in its formula build-ups to knee-jerk scares. The ridiculous sex scene with P. J. Soles (sans her CARRIE ballcap but still playing a vapid teenybopper) suggests an exploitation flick that just overstepped its ambitions, while the technical slip-ups (a license plate magically changing from Illinois to California; a knife in two places at one time) are merely annoying.

Like another of Carpenter's collaborations, EYES OF LAURA MARS, HALLOWEEN broaches intriguing twists, on standard themes, only long enough to abandon them for obvious and easy climaxes. Though DARK STAR didn't *really* get any careers off to flying starts, Carpenter's "apprenticeship" in film is taking too long. □

by Dave Schow

CAPSULE COMMENTS



NOCTURNA
John Carradine—a Dracula for the Geritol set.

CAPTAIN AMERICA [Rod Holcomb] CBS-TV, 1/19/79, 100 minutes, color. With: Reb Brown, Len Birman, Heather Menzies.

This comic book-to-film adaptation is totally inept, from the embarrassing acting to the submoronic story involving Steve Rogers (Captain America's alter-ego) in a plot to steal a billion dollars in gold while holding the city of Phoenix hostage with the threat of a neutron bomb. Rogers is transformed into superhero Captain America through the use of FLAG, a serum which gives him superhero powers. For reasons too dull to bother with, Rogers is the only person in the world who can take the stuff. This wouldn't even pass muster as Saturday morning kidvid, so it's hard to imagine what audience CBS was aiming for.

Dan Scapperotti

CIRCLE OF IRON [Richard Moore] Avco-Embassy, 4/79, 102 minutes, color. With: David Carradine, Jeff Cooper, Roddy McDowall, Christopher Lee.

A marriage between sand-and-sandal, sword and sorcery and kung-fu infused with Bruce Lee's philosophy. Surprisingly affecting and beguiling, the film tells of an arena fighter and his quest for the Book of Enlightenment. A series of trials with bizarre opponents (the monkey-man, the panther-man) stand between him and Zetan the Keeper (Lee). On his travels (through exquisite Israeli locations), he keeps chancing on a blindman who plays a silent flute and teaches him of life and its meaning. Although Jeff Cooper is weak as the protagonist, and Lee's is yet another nothing part, the film, with its superb musical score, is too strange and too interesting to dismiss easily.

Alan Jones

DAWN OF THE DEAD [George Romero] United Films, 4/79, 127 minutes, color. With: Ken Foree, Gaylen Ross, David Emge.

There is a brisk, wry sense of humor behind Romero's striking return to the land of the living dead, though the film owes more of a debt to the kind of breakneck style and shock-cut editing that characterized THE CRAZIES. The plot is non-existent, really; having laid down the framework in NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD, Romero must rely on his ability to carry two hours of movie on sheer combustible energy. This film works sporadically, as in the first thirty minutes, which proves that Romero can rivet an audience with the simplest of action, but soon after stumbles into a trade-off between unusually realistic gore effects and Three Stooges-type slapstick comedy. The latter especially makes one unconcerned with the hacked limbs and relentless bloodletting, not quite the effect Romero intended, but the closest we've come to an authentic horror-comedy since Corman's LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS.

Jeffrey Frentzen

FEMMES FATALES [Bertrand Blier] New Line, 9/77, 77 minutes, color & scope. With: Jean Rochefort, Jean-Pierre Marielle.

Bertrand Blier, who recently won the Best Foreign Film Oscar for GET OUT YOUR HANKERCHIEFS, has made an entire satirical fantasy from Louis Malle's "MacGuffin" in BLACK MOON: a physical war between men and women, with the latter the aggressors against the meek male population which only seeks quiet, companionship, music, good food and wine. In the midst of fighting, a pair of refugees are captured, rendered by a room full of scientific apparatus to permanent erection on which endless lines of women are sexually serviced. Eventually, the pair wear out and, horribly aged from their ordeal, are exiled on a barren mountain. They escape on some weird Da Vinci-esque flying machines, land in a thicket of giant tentacles and are drawn downward and into a cavernous tunnel of pulsating, spongy reddish tissue, where they meet some of their pre-war male friends, now shabby and huddled around a tiny fire. The film's last shot confirms our suspicions: they are imprisoned in a giant vagina. The French, they are a funny race. This film, made in 1975 and originally titled LA CALMOS, has been cut by some 30 minutes by (uncredited) the infamous Fima Noveck.

David Bartholomew

LORD OF THE RINGS [Ralph Bakshi] United Artists, 11/78, 131 minutes, color. With the voices of: Christopher Guard, William Squire, John Hurt.

Tolkien debased! I never imagined anyone capable of transforming J. R. R. Tolkien's fantasy masterpiece into something dreary and valueless, yet Ralph Bakshi, the artist who showed such great promise in films like HEAVY TRAFFIC, has managed to spin mythic gold into straw. While giving lip-service to his affection for Tolkien's work, Bakshi proceeded to make a soulless, ugly film that is but a grim, wraith-like caricature of Tolkien's Middle Earth. Bakshi follows the plot, includes most of the characters, but captures none of the poetry, beauty or magic of Tolkien. It's all a joyless exercise, consisting of unimaginatively staged and directed reference footage traced into animation, and backed-up with a brassy, blaring score by Leonard Rosenman which is too much like his music for BENEATH THE PLANET OF THE APES! With a budget incapable of doing justice to the work in either live-action or animation, Bakshi devised cheap, corner-cutting techniques that combined the worst qualities of both media. He got the film out, on time, and for a price.

Frederick S. Clarke

NOCTURNA [Harry Tampa] Irwin Yablans Co., 3/79, 83 minutes, color. With: John Carradine, Yvonne DeCarlo, Nai Bonet.

Nai Bonet, the celebrated exbelly dancer, has produced this satire on the vampire theme, relying heavily on the current disco music trend. Carradine is in fine form,



CIRCLE OF IRON
David Carradine goes ape.

apparently having fun playing Dracula, a wizened old man who protests, "I don't even have my fangs anymore," as he gently plucks a pair of dentures from a glass of water. Nocturna is the count's rebellious granddaughter, who becomes enamored with a young musician. She runs off with him to New York, and Dracula follows, intent on disrupting her plans. Filmed entirely in New York City, NOCTURNA doesn't take itself too seriously, has no real horror elements, and features some acting which is especially unmemorable.

Dan Scapperotti

NOSFERATU [Werner Herzog] 20th Century-Fox, 2/79, 95(106) minutes, color. With: Klaus Kinski, Isabelle Adjani, Bruno Ganz.

Herzog aims for long-range lyricism but is drowned by poor continuity, phonetic acting, a dirge-like pace and a preposterous "surprise" ending. Kinski tries hard as the vampire, but is forever being defeated by sharp focus, color, logical editing, and even crisp sound. Murnau knew better. Longer by more than ten minutes, the German version *has* to be better—and Fox is proving it! After the picture was laughed off the screen at an LA showing in February, American release (set for May) was pushed back to *October*, giving the labs time to re-edit and subtitle the original. And the executives time to pray.

Tim Lucas

PATRICK [Richard Franklin] Filmex, 2/79, 106 minutes, color. With: Susan Penhaligon, Robert Thompson, Bruce Barry.

The title character is an alarming cypher of a young man who, from the depths of his three-year coma, wreaks havoc on his "enemis" via psychokenesis. Patrick has a particular affinity for things electrical, perhaps stemming from his last pre-coma act: electrocuting his mother and lover as they romp in the bathtub. But Norman Bates had personality-plus compared to Patrick, whose motivations remain as hazy as the character. Fortunately, he has the good taste to lust after his sympathetic nurse (Penhaligon), who suspects that he might not be just a vege after all.

The premise is really a lot better than you might think, and

STARCRASH
Caroline Munro as Stella Star. Alas, the film is not so well built.



CAPSULE COMMENTS

Australian director Franklin is certainly competent. The presentation of psychokenesis here is not bad at all. But PATRICK's real problem is its casual indifference, a deliberate decision not to make a committment to the horror genre.

Jordan R. Fox

PHANTASM [Don Coscarelli] Avco-Embassy, 4/79, 90 minutes, color. With: Michael Baldwin, Bill Tornbury, Reggie Bannister, Angus Scrim, Terrie Kalbus.

Beings from another dimension stab people to death, steal their bodies, compress the corpses into dwarves and then reanimate them. All this and they run a mortuary on the side. The special effects are extremely uneven. Notable is an airborne silver device that impacts with someone's head, and with a retractible drill bores through the nose and eyes in closeup; sliced-off fingers, oozing yellow slime, spontaneously transform into a plastic-and-fur insect which looks like a mail-order novelty from the Captain Company. The film is worth catching if you meet it halfway, are able to stomach the gore and don't mind an endless number of dream-within-a-dream sequences.

Judith P. Harris

QUINTET [Robert Altman] 20th Century-Fox, 2/79, 100 minutes, color. With: Paul Newman, Vittorio Gassman, Bibi Andersson, Fernando Rey.

QUINTET is a film about games that is constructed like a puzzle but, like so many games, amounts to little more than a temporary diversion without any substance. Altman's point of view is as cold and calculating as the film's frosty landscape, yet he wants QUINTET to appear a compassionate movie, in that we are supposed to care very deeply about the state of humanity as portrayed onscreen. Unfortunately, Altman outsmarts himself with his own considerable style. Everything works toward a sense of strangeness, the unfamiliar snowbound terrain, the international cast with their contrasting accents, the archaic dialogue, devoid of jokes, contractions or colloquialisms. The characters are isolated from any recognizable aspect of the human condition, and are no more flesh and blood than the cold Quintet game tokens. It's impossible to feel any involvement with them.

Lisa Jensen



QUINTET
Nina Van Pallandt, a sore loser.

THE SHOUT [Jerry Skolimowski] Filmex, 3/79, 87 minutes, color. With: Alan Bates, Susannah York, John Hurt, Tim Curry.

Confusion reigns supreme in one of the more unusual and ambitious films to grace the genre in quite some time. The one-tenth of one percent of the audience who stand any chance of following this film and getting something out of it will have: a strong familiarity with the Robert Graves story on which it is based, an advanced degree in anthropology (specializing in Aborigine culture and tribal magic), a computer-quick mind programmed for allusion and symbolic shorthand, the deductive reasoning and intuition of Sherlock Holmes, and the ability to reedit the film into some comprehensible order as it plays out. To put it simply, THE SHOUT is effectively scuttled by arty overkill. Too much essential information is withheld; there are just too damn many important details left out.

It's especially maddening because the film is otherwise worthwhile, boasting a number of highly compelling scenes, and an overwhelming conviction to its fantasy that is decidedly rare. The film should be seen for its lofty intentions, fine photography and impressive Dolby effects. But beware!

Jordan R. Fox

STAR BABE [Ann Perry] Evolution Enterprises, 12/78, 80 minutes, color. With: Tomi La Roux, Jason Welles, Wendy Long.

This is a porno film rip-off of STAR WARS—to call it a satire or a parody would be too charitable. There is a Cantina sequence with rubber-masked aliens. Star Babe (Tomi La Roux) goes down on something that looks like a werewolf, but may be taken for a wookie in ecstasy. The chief villain wears black and one of those Darth Vader masks sold by Don Post Studios, only slightly modified. His henchmen all wear Post's Imperial Trooper masks, as is. No doubt the producers of this film could be sued for all this, if they could be found (the director isn't even credited!). . .or maybe the Star Wars Corporation just got a bit overzealous with their fast-buck liscensing agreements? In any case, the novelty of seeing George Lucas' clean-cut universe reduced to assorted X-rated couplings wears thin very fast. There is some nice (but grainy) astronomical effects footage that must have been lifted from a 16mm documentary, patched in with some stupidly crude model work. Don't let curiosity get the best of you—this film should be avoided at all costs!

Frederick S. Clarke

STARCRASH [Luigi Cozzi] New World, 3/79, 92 minutes, color. With: Marjoe Gortner, Caroline Munro, Christopher Plummer, Judd Hamilton.

Illegitimate son of STAR WARS! STARCRASH includes everything from an opening shot of a battle cruiser flying across the screen to an unconvincing android with a Texas drawl ("You *cain't* keep a *gud* robot down"). No doubt some will say that all this junk is intentionally funny, but it's been done so much better elsewhere, as in DARK STAR. The models are well-designed but poorly controlled, the laser fire is often misdirected, and some of the planets look like painted ping-pong balls. Suffice it to say that the adventures on these planets are without any interest.

Glen Egbert

SUPERMAN [Richard Donner] Warner Brothers, 12/78, 143 minutes, color, 70mm, stereo. With: Christopher Reeve, Gene Hackman, Margot Kidder, Ned Beatty, Valerie Perrine.

The film fails to explore the unique possibilities of having a new and modernized Superman tackle the real problems of the world in the late 1970s—assassinations, mass suicides, mindfuckers, famine, the CIA, sexism, racism, *provocateurs*, ageism, unemployment and economic collapse, corporate collapse, corporate takeovers, bureaucratic psychopaths, etc. Instead, he confronts villains not much different from those of the BATMAN television show, demonstrates feats of skill and halts several disasters. Despite a round of perfect casting in all roles, with Christopher Reeve the first actor ever to examine Superman's interior life, the storyline doggedly pursues the "disaster movie" trend, alleviated only by the occasional satiric moments, the barrage of acceptable to excellent special effects and the genuinely fascinating sexual/romantic interest between Lois and Supe. Although a case might be made that super-villain Lex Luthor is a symbolic stand-in for all terrorists, this idea has been exploited (for the parade of disasters) rather than offered legitimately. Too bad. But there's always the stunning first 45 minutes of the film—ranking with the most imaginative sf ever filmed.

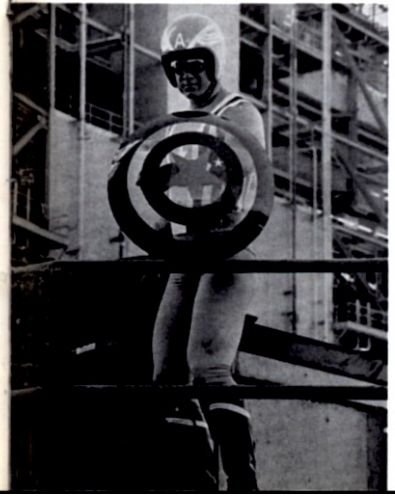
Robert Stewart

THE TIME MACHINE [Henning Schallerup] NBC-TV Big Event, 11/5/78, 100 minutes, color. With: John Beck, Whit Bissell.

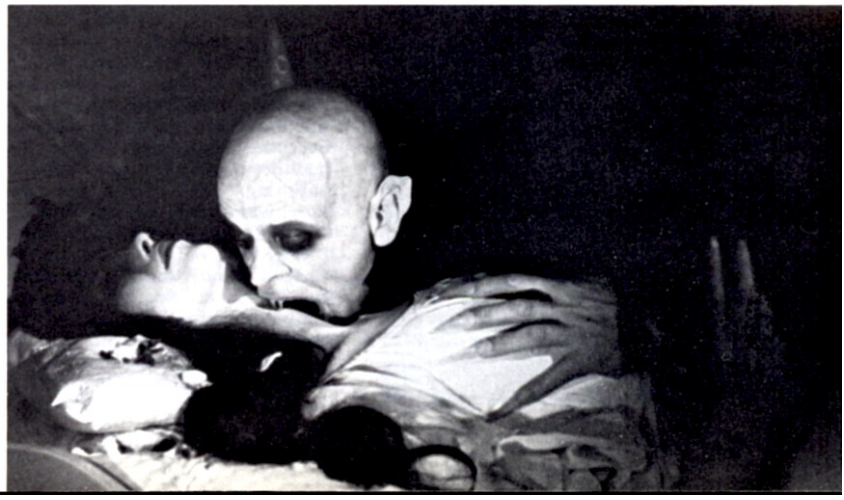
Clad in a nearly indestructable leisure suit, John Beck rides a stainless steel imitation of George Pal's time machine through an el cheapo remake riddled with excruciatingly obvious stock footage and amateur acting. Scripting is the major problem, tossing Beck into a Salem witch-burning and an old West shoot-'em-out before trundling him off to a ridiculously simplistic Eloi society. MGM and George Pal are considering suing the TV-movie's producers, Sunn Classic Pictures, for copyright infringement of Pal's 1960 film of the same name. Whether or not the action is worth the trouble is questionable; this sloppy production makes a fool out of Beck, who plays it as if he could use a good stiff drink, and the viewer willing to stay with it for the full two hours.

Leigh Thomas Hanlon

CAPTAIN AMERICA
TV's comic book nadir.



NOSFERATU
Klaus Kinski as Dracula. His bite is sharp, but his English is N.S.G.



TIMEWARP



Wayne Schmidt

by Jordan R. Fox

For some reason, it just cracks me up, this collage on white posterboard hanging on the wall of David Allen's animation studio. It's a full size blow-up of Jim Davis (a Rory Calhoun type and nominal "star" of TIMEWARP), wearing a typically sour, skeptical expression, and looking towards a weird miniature landscape where some fantastic action is supposed to take place. His caption reads, "Are you FX-boys *sure* this goddamned thing's gonna look real?" It helps to know that the Davis character uses the word 'goddamn' throughout the picture.

Despite (or perhaps because of) what the two young producers tell me, I'd have to guess that, as with the previous Charles Band production, LASERBLAST [see 6:4:4], the animation and other effects are the major reason patrons will fork over their three or four bucks at the neighborhood theatre. The hope of all concerned is that this time the audience will get a good deal more for its money. Some of the problems—technical and otherwise—inherent in the development and creation of this kind of film project, were illuminated in a roundtable discussion, over lunch, with five of the principal filmmakers and special effects persons, and in a separate conversation with David Allen.

Not coincidentally, some of these names should be familiar to readers interested in animation, especially those familiar with THE PRIMEVALS [8:1:4]: makeup designer Steve Neill, who initiated the TIMEWARP project and co-wrote the first draft screenplay with co-producer Wayne Schmidt; Paul Gentry, who originally wanted to break into film as a cinematographer, but became involved in animation and optical effects on low-budget pictures such as LASERBLAST and THE CRATER LAKE MONSTER, and is serving on TIMEWARP as director of special visual effects; Dave Carson, art director on THE PRIMEVALS, also handling miniatures and matte paintings for TIMEWARP and actor-illustrator-animator Randy Cook.

The inception of TIMEWARP is a bit involved, demonstrating some of the twists and turns a film (not just low-budget films) can go through on the way to being made. Steve Neill had gotten involved with Charles Band Productions via his makeup work on LASERBLAST and END OF THE WORLD. Neill wanted to parlay this association into a project of his own, so together with friend Wayne Schmidt, he wrote a scenario entitled STAR RACERS. Paul Gentry had some input on the writing of this, and even went so far as to make an effects demo reel. The proposed space picture was far beyond the means of the (heretofore) poverty row Band organization and, as it happened, Band did not care much for the idea in any case. But, he inquired, did they have anything else? Something with a lot of effects and action, but all occurring in one location, and not too expensive to produce? Well. . .yes they did, come to mention it. Schmidt and Neill followed up with an idea they had been working on for awhile, about a family that leaves civilization to live out in the desert, in an advanced solar-powered house of the father's design. Unfortunately, the house turns out to have been built on the site of a Vortex (which was the film's first title), a shifting doorway into other times and dimensions—varied environments inhabited by strange creatures. Schmidt stressed that he wanted to come up with a more intelligent and entertaining film than what has generally been available in this genre.

With Band's endorsement, the two first-time producers wrote a full script. Their draft was not entirely satisfactory, and the script was handed over to writers/producers Larry Carroll and David Schmoeller (of Band's live-action horror film, TOURIST TRAP) for a second draft. Schmidt concedes that among all their changes were several good ideas. At this point, Steve Neill's extensive test makeups were discarded in favor of model animation and opticals. Then, John "Bud" Cardos came in as director, on the strength of his work on KINGDOM OF THE SPIDERS and the still unreleased THE DARK. His contract gave him the right of script revision, which he exercised, farming the script out to a television writer for the third and final draft. The project had wandered somewhat afield from where Neill and Schmidt had begun. Each step of the way the effects aspect had gotten more ambitious and the story more diffuse. *But the movie was going to be made!*

Live action shooting was scheduled to begin January 1978, but was put off until May, due to problems with TOURIST TRAP, then also in production. Though they were the producers, Schmidt and Neill found they had not much more ability to control production than they had control over the script. Says Neill, "We had no power to sign checks or anything." The live action material was completed last summer.

At David Allen's studio, THE PRIMEVALS (under option to Charles Band) was in preproduction. Just at this time, Band's company was running into serious cash-flow problems. Since Band had three other films in various stages of completion, THE PRIMEVALS was put on "hold."

Cook: "TIMEWARP had gone over budget by 100% and the effects still had to be done. THE PRIMEVALS came to a halt while Charlie Band sought new investors for it. Consequently, the people at the shop were still working as a functioning unit. They, under Paul's direction, undertook to do the TIMEWARP effects. Dave Allen was involved in an advisory capacity, providing studio facilities and answering all the questions about *how to do* the effects."

Gentry: "Without Dave's help we would have been in real trouble."

Schmidt: "I think it should be said that this was strictly his own generosity, not a matter of legal entanglement with Band. Dave is one of the real good guys in the industry. The fact that TIMEWARP is even going to be finished is due to his involvement."

Gentry: "There could have been a lot of bad feelings about it, but Dave isn't the kind of person to let that happen. We inherited his crew, but he would have inherited our budgetary problems anyway. This way, THE PRIMEVALS can be properly packaged so that when it does go, it will go all the way to the end."

With adroit timing, the waitress appears to see about refills on the drink order, just as the discussion is edging deeper into the problems that surfaced on TIMEWARP. Someone protests that it's hard to get anything done half tanked-up. Someone else, insisting on that second Scotch, retorts, "Some days, you can't get anything done *without* a few good shots." Back to the live action for a moment.

Schmidt: "Our principals were not even cast until two days before the picture started, so the actors. . ."

Neill: ". . .they didn't know it was an effects picture!"

Schmidt: "Bud [Cardos] had a very definite idea what he wanted to do with this picture, and Charlie Band had another one, but they never communicated. We were stuck in the middle. The type of thing Bud wanted to do was way beyond Charlie's financial resources, but Bud was going to go ahead and do it anyway. A lot of things that were going to be done live action were thrown over into effects. We ended up with a huge effects picture and not enough money to complete it." Are there plans to reshoot any of the live action? "One of the main problems in the version that now exists is that our action sequences from the first draft remain pretty much intact, but the motivation is no longer there, which makes for a very bizarre viewing experience. Hopefully we can rectify that. Re-editing—definitely; and some reshooting is being discussed."

A lot of top talent has contributed to TIMEWARP: Greg Jein, with some model work; Pete Kuran (now director of animation on THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK) and Chris Casady for rotoscoping and light animation of the FORBIDDEN PLANET kind; the opening supernova explosion is by Joe Viskocil; stop motion armatures by Tom St. Amand; some design work by Laine Liska; animation puppets sculpted by Lyle Conway; some opticals by Robert Blalack. TIMEWARP features three stop motion creatures: the heavy-set Troll, who fights to the death with something the animators refer to as the Wolf-Lizard, and a magical Pixie (or gremlin), who has no wings but enjoys the power of flight nonetheless. Another effects highlight in the film, via matte-enhanced miniature sets, is the Graveyard of Lost Spaceships. In certain technical respects, TIMEWARP can be thought of as a limited trial run for THE PRIMEVALS. Much matte work is being laid in via rear process, in a way that can, at least theoretically, yield a much better result than is frequently associated with this technique. Also, there are a raft of problems to be overcome in filming the ungenerously budgeted effects picture in the Panavision format.

Top: Randy Cook animates the Wolf-Lizard in front of a miniature barn door. Middle: The Wolf-Lizard model, which was sculpted and painted by Lyle Conway. Bottom: Paul Gentry and the "doughnut" ship, designed and built by Dave Carson, during filming.

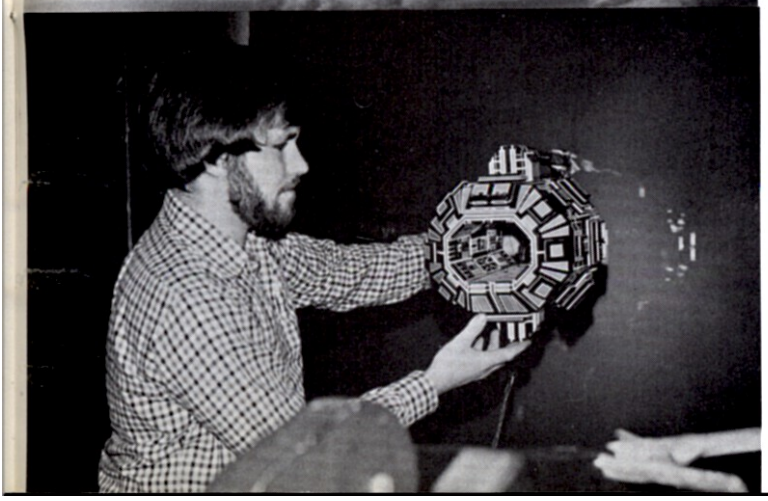
David Allen: "I had misgivings about the project from the beginning. They started around the same time THE PRIMEVALS did, but were very unprepared. Basically I'm serving in an advisory capacity, and lately in a somewhat more direct capacity. I did the animation on one of the minor sequences, and got the optical printing into condition. To me, working out rear projection problems in the scope format is most interesting. It *can* be done well. The quality of your original duplication material is absolutely vital, no matter what kind of dupe it is—matte shot, front or rear projection. In situations where the Dynamation kind of effect is practical, I would not hesitate to use it. I've been happy about being able to experiment on TIMEWARP in preparation for THE PRIMEVALS. It saves me quite a bit of research time."

The producers hope their fledgling effort will not rise above the present $800,000 budget ceiling, and everyone involved hopes TIMEWARP will be completed in time for July release. By then it may have another title. "TIMEWARP, Timetex or whatever. . ." says Cook. ". . .Kotex," grumbles Neill.

Schmidt: "In the state the picture's in [now], it won't be what I'd hoped for, but at the same time it should be sufficiently entertaining—to the credit of these gentlemen and Dave Allen's studio—that it won't be a rip-off. It won't be a LASERBLAST, where you get 10 minutes of animation and unrelieved tedium for 8 reels. I think we'll be above the standard exploitation film. With the amount of work that went into it, I think we'll surprise people with this film." □







SUPERMAN II
Grounded in Mid-flight.

Preproduction on the Warner Brothers' follow-up to SUPERMAN is stalled, primarily because director Richard Donner has left the project. Will Superman fly again? Although half of the footage for the sequel was shot concurrently with Part One, much is not even in the can yet. Of the footage to be shot on SUPERMAN II, foremost will be an ending. The finale had already been filmed, but Donner used it on the tail of the first SUPERMAN. Before the sequel was scheduled to finish up production, Donner demanded artistic control over the project, and when denied it by producers Alexander and Ilya Salkind, cleaned out his desk in London and walked out. Despite all this, the sequel will be credited as "a Richard Donner film." SUPERMAN II pits the man of steel against Zod (Terence Stamp) and his henchmen, banished from Krypton at the start of the first film. Their antics include several flying sequences with Superman battling the Krypton villains by tossing cars and other unwieldy objects in mid-air. The quality of special effects will have to improve over those in the first film if such dogfighting is expected to look realistic. The Salkinds are beginning to sweat over the possibility of not delivering a second feature to Warners in June 1980.

SATURN 3
Hydroponic Love.

Sir Lew Grade is spending $18 million to go to SATURN 3, a spacebound epic featuring Kirk Douglas and Farrah Fawcett-Majors as astronauts growing food for Earth's starving populace on an astral greenhouse. Enter Harvey Keitel and his robot pal, and what we have is a *menage a trois* down on the space farm. Producer Stanley Donen took over director's chores from set designer John Barry, who had been working as director for three weeks before experiencing "creative differences" with Donen. A lavish $2 million set, Douglas' stellar outpost, has been built on two back-to-back stages at Shepperton Studios in London, where shooting will wrap up in early May.

CONAN THE INDEFINITE

CONAN, envisioned as a $10-12 million film based on the early years in the life of Robert E. Howard's barbarian anti-hero, is slowly gearing up in pre-production, with a first draft screenplay now completed by Oliver Stone (SEIZURE and MIDNIGHT EXPRESS). All that is known of the film's plot is that it concerns a young Conan and his confrontation with a sorcerer. Stone's screenplay will remain a tentative first draft until a director is contracted by producer Edward Pressman. This all according to Edward Summer, associate producer for Pressman's production company.

At present, only a handful of directors are under consideration, including John Milius, John Boorman, Alan Parker, John Frankenheimer and Ralph Bakshi (LORD OF THE RINGS).

Summer explained the secrecy surrounding the project by saying, "It's too early in the game to be that open. We won't have a director until spring or summer, and won't be releasing the film until Easter of 1980. When a director is signed to the project, he may see fit to make changes in the script. Why promise your readers a special effects sequence, a creature or a battle scene when we may change it tomorrow?"

Visual effects are being designed and storyboarded by Jim Danforth, Ron Cobb, and Rick Baker. This impressive crew is turning out a half-dozen new sketches each week, detailing all necessary steps in special effects and make-up, including some scenes of dimensional animation. Danforth will act as special effects director as well. Artist Frank Frazetta's reported participation on the film (7:3:72) as "visual consultant" has become "slightly less firm in likelihood," says Summer.

Principal photography is not scheduled to begin for another 9-10 months, which places the film in an official state of "pre-*pre*-production." The production team, including Roy Thomas of *Marvel Comics* as story consultant, is growing slowly and impressively. Ray Harryhausen was contacted to work on the film but, as Summer explained, "After speaking with Ray directly a couple of times, I learned that he's already committed to Charles Schneer for two more projects and I also think, at this point in his life, he would prefer to work on things of a more personal nature. He was also approached for the STAR WARS sequel, but declined all offers." □

by Tim Lucas

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MOONRAKER

MOONRAKER is the new James Bond thriller, which began filming last August 14, on Paris, Rio de Janeiro, Venice and Guatemala locations for producer Albert Broccoli and director Lewis Gilbert. Roger Moore will return to play James Bond, as will 007's deadly arch-enemy from THE SPY WHO LOVED ME, "Jaws," played by Richard Kiel. Screenwriter Christopher Wood has taken liberties with Ian Fleming's original title and characters (the story was one of the first Bond properties optioned for filming back in the early sixties, and was almost made after FROM RUSSIA WITH LOVE). Sir Hugo Drax, the villain of MOONRAKER, was described in the book as a former Nazi passing himself off as an Englishman, with a reconstituted face (the tragic result of unsuccessful plastic surgery) covered in grotesque red hair. Drax will in fact be portrayed by distinguished French actor Michael Lonsdale with a simple black beard and foreign accent, a far cry from the repulsive Drax of Fleming's original novel.

Lonsdale does not seem to share the quasi-religious faith that producer Albert Broccoli and director Lewis Gilbert have in the successful nature of the Bond films. But at the same time Lonsdale feels no contempt for the enterprise. During the interview, he didn't seem too over-impressed by his "new power" as Bond's arch-enemy. His most famous international role was as Commissaire Lebel, 'the best *flic* of France,' in THE DAY OF THE JACKAL. His other film roles have been limited to European productions little-known in the United States.

We spoke with Lonsdale on the Paris sets of MOONRAKER in late November, while shooting was still in progress. The film is expected to be released by United Artists in July.

by Frederic Albert Levy

Had you been interested in the Bond series before MOONRAKER?

I saw the first three Bond films, but I did not find them amusing. But when I was proposed the part of Drax, I wanted to update my Bondian knowledge, and was very surprised at THE SPY WHO LOVED ME. I thought it was very good.

Could you tell briefly the story of the film?

James Bond is confronted with the case of a certain Dr. Drax, a billionaire who, just like Hitler, wants to select a super-race of men, pure and beautiful, and take them to a planet, have them reproduce there, and in the meantime destroy all that is on this planet—Earth—to afterwords bring back here his new perfect human race.

This has very little to do with Moonraker, *the novel.*

As far as Drax is concerned, the film script is much simpler. Drax is not English in the film—he is just presented as a "foreigner."

Do you pay attention to the technical aspects of the film?

Oh yes. I was literally moved when I saw Ken Adam's set for the satellite control room. *That* was really something! There was magic about it, something fantastic.

You are working with an international crew on MOONRAKER. Does that create a particular atmosphere?

There is no difference, really. Although half the crew is French, including the director of photography [Jean Tournier, who replaced an ill Claude Renoir], the whole thing is essentially British.

If, as a spectator, you are interested in the lavish sets, aren't you afraid, as an actor, they might do you harm?

Yes, but every part you play is a risk to take. It can be good or bad for you. But I really have a good time, because I was used to filming in cramped rooms with dingy cameras. The English know how to save the actor from bothering about any technical question. As for my part as such, I was somewhat surprised when Lewis Gilbert told me, "the villain is the villain;" Lewis thinks in Shakesperean terms. When people go to see a James Bond film, they go to see certain elements. After ten films, they don't want to be confronted with a psychological drama, or something they would normally see in another film—they come to see a James Bond film. But I think there is more to it. In MOONRAKER, the villain Drax represents a whole catagory of paranoid and crazy people, those who believe there is some purity to be kept in this world. For me it's a change from the minister and president roles I'd been playing for so long. But I will be too pleased to shave off this cruel beard.

Does Drax have any ruthless henchmen?

Of course! I have a Japanese servant, but Bond wipes him out very quickly. When I want a replacement, somebody suggests "Jaws," and I accept right away.

You are fairly tall, but you have to look up when you talk to Richard Kiel?

Richard Kiel is a very nice guy. He's a math teacher in California. He is an example of of how the cinema can change somebody's life. You couldn't say he is a good actor, but he's got presence, which is the essential thing.

I had thought "Jaws" came back in this film as a "good guy."

He becomes a good guy at the end of the film. Bond makes him realize that there will be no place for him in the world conceived by Drax.

How does Drax die?

He is shot by one of those special Bond darts and thrown out of the satellite.

What is your relationship with Lewis Gilbert? Can he pay much attention to the actors, if he is already busy with technical problems?

You know, that question reminds me of the time I worked with Joseph Losey. A couple of times I asked him, "How would you like me to play this part?" but he looked so frightened, and I understood I should not ask him such a question, because he had no idea of what the answer was. As for Lewis, some of that applies since he is working almost totally in relation to the film's technology and set decor.

At one point, I suggested to Lewis that I should stand up a get closer to a big globe on the set. And Lewis just said, "Yes, good idea, if you want to do it that way." This type of production is not conceived from the point of view of an artist. There's a very strong *situation*, and a set. One scene in the film shows a gondola flying across Piazza San Marco in Venice. Lewis knows his job, and there are very few ways to shoot a scene like that.

Top and Middle: Michael Lonsdale poses on Ken Adam's magnificent space-age set. Bottom: Lois Chiles, Roger Moore as Bond, and Richard Kiel as "Jaws."

We actors have to add something amusing here and there. Lewis asked me to be more of a *smiling* Drax. I personally would have played the character as more severe, but Lewis pointed out that Drax is a *happy* character, content with what he's doing.

And about Bond, the character?

"Mr. Bond, you reappear with the inevitability of an unloved season" is one of the niceties I tell him. The dialogues are fairly short and direct. Roger Moore is a very nice person. I didn't know him well, but he came to me one day to congratulate me on my performance in THE DAY OF THE JACKAL. Originally, he was to have played the Jackal, by the way. I think he is one of the rare actors who can afford to do Bond and then do something else. He's got humor, and always shows that he does not take the part too seriously.

How were you chosen to play Drax?

An important casting director in France, Margot Capelier, suggested me for the Drax role. And perhaps Roger Moore had me in mind from my performance in THE DAY OF THE JACKAL. I think James Mason was offered the part first. But he turned it down. Some actors perhaps do not want to participate in James Bond films.

Do you feel there is always a very strong relationship between Bond and his enemy?

Of course. We're dealing with archetypes. It all depends on what you think is good, and what you think is not. Is the law, is justice good? There is always a good hero and a bad villain. And although this picture is something of a caricature, symbolically, that good/evil concept is what is in people's minds. Bond has the license to destroy, the license to kill, which is one of the great unconscious factors of mankind, killing in the name of Justice.

A James Bond film is, I think, seen by one person out of four on earth. The films do not pretend to bring any revolutionary ideas to the cinema, but they are "entertainment." And they are based on certains notions fundamental in the world, good and evil. Bond is just Judex with another name, or Zorro. He is defender of the Law.

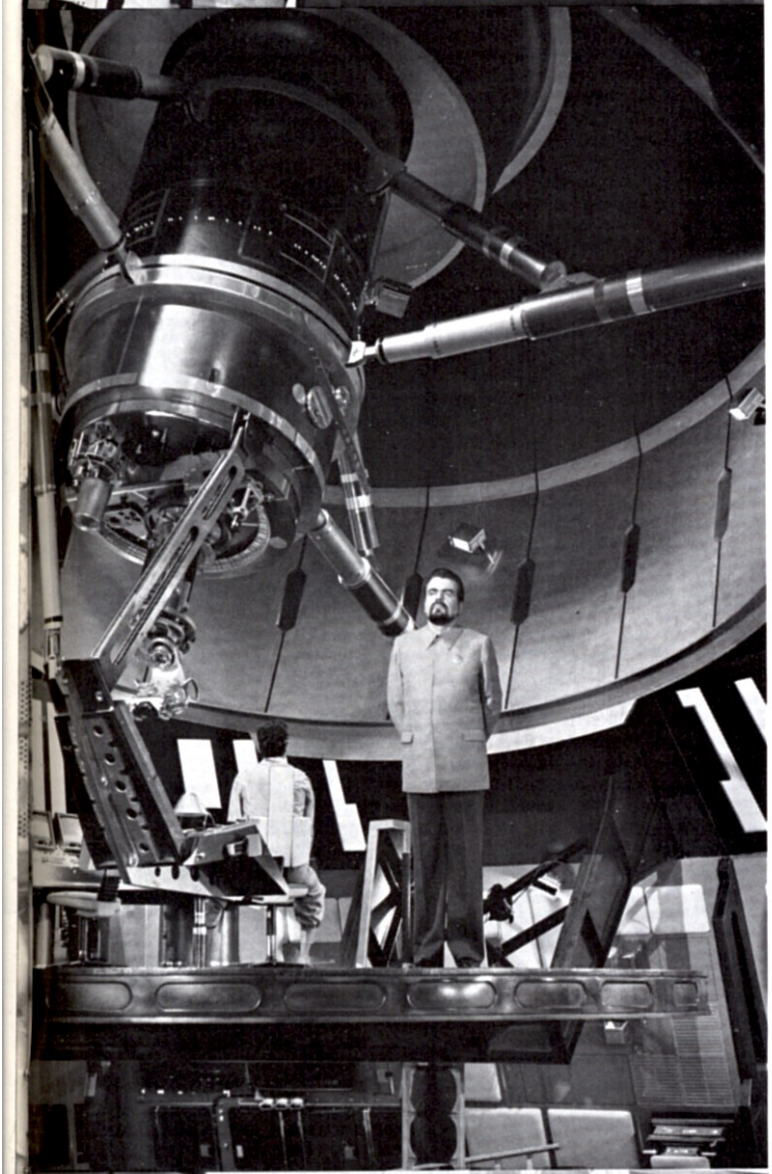
I do have a concealed violence, which I'm afraid of, and which I get rid of in parts I play; it really does me good. For even all those people who don't like violence might be secretly violent. My life as an actor certainly helped me acquire some balance. I think that any artistic activity derives from a need to give the world a new, satisfying balance. □

Roger Moore as 007, dwarfed by Ken Adam's space station set for MOONRAKER.



PROPHECY







For the six months John Frankenheimer was shooting the $9 million production of PROPHECY, it was shrouded in a blanket of secrecy. The film had been announced first as THE WINDSOR PROJECT (referring to one of the gates on the Paramount lot), throwing the press and possible imitative fastbuck producers off the track. Its plot was a closely guarded secret, but the screenwriter, David Seltzer (THE OMEN), always thought the secrecy was "ridiculous," and signed a phony name to the loyalty oath passed around to the crew. Finally, in January, the veil was officially lifted and the deceptive title dropped when Seltzer's novelization of PROPHECY (Ballantine, $2.25) was published.

PROPHECY is an ecological disaster story set in northern Maine. Robert Vern (Robert Foxworth) is sent by the Enviornmental Protection Agency to report on the ecological effects of the local lumber company. The area is plagued by a series of brutal murders which have fanned the flames of antagonism between local residents, who depend on the lumber company for their jobs, and the Indian tribe that inhabits the forest and claims the land is theirs. Vern, accompanied by his pregnant wife (Talia Shire), is soon confronted with the staggering evidence that pollution caused by the mill has created an evolutionary and ecological imbalance. Hugh fish swim the lakes, several Indian pregnancies terminate in still births of horribly deformed babies, and a monster of incalculable strength is roaming the forest, murdering campers and hunters. When Vern discovers the creature's mutated offspring, he tries to preserve one "child" as proof of the impending ecological disaster, but its parent arrives and goes on a killing spree that leaves most of the characters dead.

On the genesis of PROPHECY, Seltzer explained, "John Frankenheimer, who's an avid fisherman, called me from his boat in the Virgin Islands and said that it was his ambition since he was a child to do the world's greatest monster movie. I was in a phase in my life where I was telling everyone that I wouldn't touch any project that wasn't serious-minded and educational. However, what I've done in PROPHECY is take another pet subject that I was nurturing along for a while (the ecological disaster), and saw this monster framework as the perfect sugar coating to hide a kernel of nourishment." While utilizing the commercial horror movie genre to tell something worth hearing, Seltzer is also "fascinated by horror. I've got a lot of sick fantasies and instead of going to a psychiatrist it's a good way for me to get them out and actually see them materialize. It would have been easy to do a monster movie without including this kind of serious theme and without annoying anybody with a harsh truth about our environment. I chose to annoy people. I don't think it will turn them off, because they still get all the thrills that they'd get otherwise, but they're going to have to listen to me, too."

by Dan Scapperotti



David Seltzer on the set with Robert Foxworth.

Working closely with Frankenheimer and producer Robert Rosen on the set, Seltzer rewrote his script daily, adjusting it to fit the director's action scenes and reworking the dialogue as he saw fit. "Because I was on the set the script changed a good thirty or forty percent while it was in production, and that was a delight, to be part of that process."

Special effects for the film were photographed in Vancouver and on Hollywood soundstages. "There is no stop motion," Seltzer claims, "but we do have a speeded-up camera so the creature moves a little slower and you can see something like muscles rippling. We had mechanical special effects, standard things now, computer remote control. We had an articulated head that had air pockets in it that were released by remote control—you could make it snarl and the tongue move and eyes twitch. All kinds of subtle movements by releasing these air pockets." A mechanical arm and a variety of suits were constructed to add to the monster's realism. Instead of recruiting stunt men to operate the suit, mimes and ballet dancers were used. After studying animal motions, a perfect and detailed interpretation of the unusual creature's behavior was mastered. "I have to point out," says Seltzer, "that we built the monster with a committee of veterinarians and animal behaviorists and anatomists. We're dealing with an evolutionary mixture and we really had to define the predominate posture and skeletal structure and movement." The suits will not be seen much in the final film, mostly in longshots of the lumbering beast. Effects shots of the baby monsters are what Seltzer calls "probably our most spectacular special effect. They are at once grotesque and repulsive. In fact, I have difficulty realizing that they are not real because they're so convincing." Tom Burman is in charge of makeup design, assisted by Jack Shafton, who is involved in devising makeup effects for Frankenheimer. The on-location makeup artist on PROPHECY is Ron Snyder. The Paramount production is still planned for a June 15 release. □

WATERSHIP DOWN



Martin Rosen

If the name Martin Rosen is not instantly recognizable, even in film buff circles, it's due to a career that has been notable for quality results rather than quantity of output, and the fact that most producers are not traditionally well known. Rosen is an American producer living in London. His major film credit, prior to WATERSHIP DOWN, was as co-producer of the Ken Russell film WOMEN IN LOVE.

The impetus for a film of WATERSHIP DOWN came during a film location survey Rosen was conducting in Kashmir. Rosen's production manager was being subjected to a lot of good-natured ribbing by the group because, during the off-hours, he would be thoroughly engrossed reading a novel concerning "rabbits." Never having heard of the book, and with a mixture of curiosity and skepticism, Rosen borrowed it to read on the long plane flight back from India. Like millions of readers, Rosen found himself captivated by the story. Within a few hours of landing in London, he was on the phone contacting Adams regarding the film rights.

We interviewed Rosen as he was completing preparation of the United States release of WATERSHIP DOWN (handled by Avco-Embassy), and lining up his next project, also based on a novel by Richard Adams, THE PLAGUE DOGS.

It seems like such a long jump from something like WOMEN IN LOVE to WATERSHIP DOWN.

To make it even more difficult to catagorize, I produced a play in between. I just like good stories. WATERSHIP DOWN was just such a unqiue story—I simply got immersed in it.

How did you go from total unfamiliarity with the animation medium, right into a situation where substantial expertise was required?

By surrounding myself with very talented and dedicated people. Tony Guy, my director of animation, was the only one who beat me to the studio each morning, and I was always there by 7 o'clock. He stayed later than everyone else, too. Phil Duncan, the animation supervisor, had worked with the Disney studios, and had come out of retirement to work on this film.

As someone new to animation, did you find the time factor frustrating?

When you direct a scene in live action, you see it the next day. In animation, you may not see it for six weeks. You have to keep directing the following scenes without knowing how things fit in context.

Considering the technology involved, how does one 'direct' an animated film?

The same as with live action, except that direction is given to technicians rather than to actors. You still say, "I want to pan here" or "I want it to look like this."

What are your views on the faithfulness of adaptations?

To get the feeling of the book. I had to add certain things, and of course a lot had to be left out [the book runs to some 1100 pages]. It's not the book, because the *book* is the book. For example, there's no way an audience seeing the film can be made aware of Richard Adams' love for the English countryside. All I can do is paint them as beautifully as I can.

What was the reason for the highly stylized prologue?

That was done for a couple of very specific reasons. First, I wanted to set the legendary or mythic character of rabbits, and I wanted it in a different form with a different feeling to it. Secondly, I wanted to tell the cultists that I was going to do the picture my way, and not to turn the pages in their minds. I distract them for a bit, but they're relieved to see the realistic, very full animation come in with the story they know, a minute later. They tend to rally to my side instead of opposing what I'm trying to do.

These characters, even if they are rabbits, seem to have a real life of their own, and there's a truthfulness about the real cost of various courses of action.

I wanted it on the level of a good live-action film. We have not employed normal animation techniques on this at all, because it's too serious a film—the story's too dense. Most major animated films have no story, or very thin stories, and are almost entirely just an excuse for marvelous, entertaining animation. I am not one of those who look down their nose at Disney—I think he was a genius—it's just that the kind of films I make could never be made that way.

Besides the very high tone of Adams' characters, multiple story levels and theme, there is much that could be considered revolutionary going on here.

I make a lot of demands on an audience. The fact that you can't identify the characters until you get to know them is something I did very consciously. We stayed away from using large wide eyes, which is one of the most expressive animation devices. Hazel is the only rabbit character without some distinguishing characteristic—just an ordinary, simple rabbit. He develops as a leader, emerging out of this very ordinariness, and it's only at the end of the picture that we realize, and Bigwig has to ackowledge, that he is in fact the leader.

I wanted there to be ideas that would be thought-provoking after you see the film. For most of the film our attention is mostly on the rabbits *as a group*. And I won't syncopate to music (as in the standard set by Disney) because the composer ought to give something *additional* to the film, which can only happen in post-production scoring.

When you went to make WATERSHIP DOWN, didn't you find the British film industry in pretty sorry shape? Disregarding all the American stuff being shot there.

Just about everything is fully booked: Pinewood, Shepperton, Twickenham, CTS Recording. But that's not really an industry supplying personnel and equipment. WATERSHIP DOWN is one-hundred per-cent British-financed, so if it's successful the British industry will benefit. Whereas if a Bond picture does well, Cubby Broccoli can take the money and keep it in Switzerland.

What did you have to draw on in terms of a pool of British animators?

A lot of the commercials done in Europe are animated, and the British animators are among the most highly regarded in Europe. Their work has won many awards. To get the superior animators for a feature was difficult, because it took them away from their primary market for two years. I had to convince them that what they would be doing was worth it. I said to them, "I've never seen you credited on a commercial." That was fairly persuasive.

How about the brief involvement of the late John Hubley?

John was originally engaged to be director of the film. I think he was ill at the time [Hubley died about six months after leaving the project]. What he was turning out was not representative of what WATERSHIP DOWN was to be, and there was a terrible confusion within the unit. He had such an agreeable personality, no one wanted to make waves. Eventually, he left the picture. We had to throw everything out and start from scratch.

Full *animation is usually considered to average 8 to 12 drawings per foot. You exceeded this standard?*

We averaged about 15-17; more, of course, on the slow motion sequence.

You described the delicate pastel colors used in the paintings as being influenced by the English Watercolor School.

It was right for the subject. We started with rough color sketches and then made 'color keys.' When the 'keys' have what you want for their respective scenes, all the backgrounds for a scene will be worked from that key. The browns, dark greens, and blues used on the characters themselves were very difficult, because those colors are unstable. They tend to separate and streak, so you have to redo many of those. I understand Ralph Bakshi had the same problem on LORD OF THE RINGS.

How did you arrive at this kind of coloration?

We set up our own multiplane cameras, and there were some very complicated shots. Some of it is aural, too; our sound team did a fantastic job.

Probably more care went into sound on this film than for any animated film ever. Our sound cutter was in charge of the whole editing operation. He spent many nights out on the Down recording live sound. Sounds like the movements of rabbits through the grass adds dimension. And Dolby is a stereo process that gives great clarity.

There are several shots in WATERSHIP DOWN, involving simultaneous animation on each of the multiplane levels, with a moving camera as well.

A lot of mathematics went into that, I can tell you! I asked my team to do a particular shot in Cowslip's warren that is a 360 degree shot. They told me it could not be done. I asked what made it so difficult. You have to animate your characters one way, have your background movement in another, and also interpret the camera moves—pans, tilts, or whatever. I guess this was an example of breaking the rules because you don't know it's impossible.

Why was the voice track recorded twice?

The first time as a guide for the animators; the second time because the actors could later actually see their characters and have more on which to base a reading.

The sequence in which Hazel lies wounded somewhere, and Fiver experiences a vision of the Black Rabbit coming for Hazel, is surreal, haunting, affecting.

The clairvoyance establishes that Hazel is not dead *yet*, and from then it's a race between Fiver and the Black Rabbit as to who gets there first. The sequence had to be emotional without becoming maudlin.

Will the film's realistic depiction of violence, in your opinion, cut out a potential segment of your audience?

There's an integrity to the violence, and the good guys win, which makes a difference. I don't feel the film is too strong, in terms of what kids are already likely to have seen. Some won't be mature enough to appreciate what's being said. But I did make the film *first* for adults, and *then* for the largest possible audience.

What do you see, or would you like to see, in the future of animation?

I hope that in animation, a fabulous medium of storytelling, story will become more important than style. Style is ephemeral. Animation should be viewed as just another way of making films, but also a means for telling stories that cannot be told any other way. □

Scenes from WATERSHIP DOWN. Top: During the final battle between the rabbit warrens, the General lunges at Bigwig in the burrow. 2: A surreal depiction of underground death by suffocation. 3: Fiver, guided by the Black Rabbit, finds the hiding place of a wounded Hazel. 4: Hazel is held by the evil farm cat.

by Jordan R. Fox



COMING

Ray Bradbury scripting GNOMES for television.

GNOMES is currently being prepared as a one-hour animated special to be aired on CBS-TV in the fall of 1980, from a script by Ray Bradbury, Sam Moore and Maurice Rapf. The Jack Zander Parlor will animate, with Jack Zander serving as the show's director. Executive producer is Thomas Moore. The basis for the production is the best-seller of the same title, written by Wil Huygen and illustrated by Rien Poortvliet, originally published in Holland in 1976. The book received wide critical acclaim in America.

Bradbury became involved on the project at the request of animator Chuck Jones, who was originally to have animated the show but, due to other committments, dropped out after contributing the storyboards. "I gave Zander a first draft of some seventy or eighty pages last August," said Bradbury. "What I gave them was too rich. The more characters you add per scene, the more the animation expenses go up. I put in too much detail and I didn't know how to simplify what I gave them." Moore and Rapf were asked to work on the script, and while they followed Bradbury's storyline faithfully, changes were made for economy of time and money. "Virtually every page in the book," Moore reveals, "will be used for the background cels."

However, the format of the book necessitated one change. GNOMES is a description of the culture and history of a mythic people. Therefore, in order to adapt the book to the dramatic medium, Bradbury created a narrative. "I added a great bunch of Trolls to the outline. They occur only briefly in the book, and you need more of them for a good, rousing conflict." Presently, Huygen and Poortvliet are approving the character designs.

Peter Perakos

Orion Pictures to film THE WOLFEN.

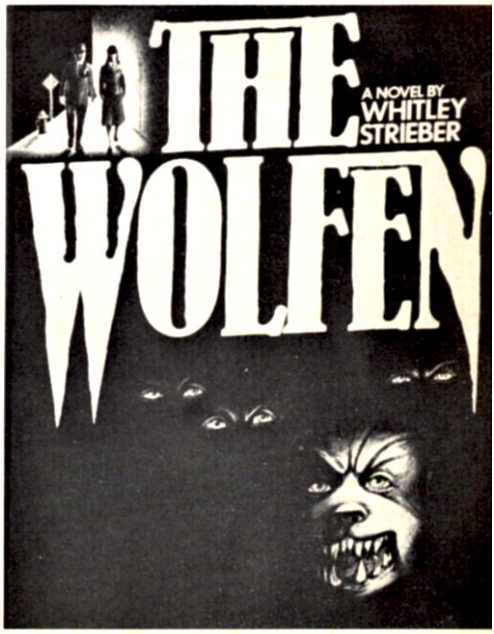
Orion Pictures has purchased screen rights to Whitley Streiber's THE WOLFEN (William Morrow and Co., $8.95). Streiber's book is not a rehashing of the old werewolf story, nor another monster-on-the-loose scenario, but an intriguing horror yarn filled with conflicting motivations and personal emotions, pitting two species in a life and death struggle for existence. The premise for this fascinating tale explains the genesis of the werewolf legend. The werewolves are not metamorphosized humans but another species of animal whose existence has been hidden by the growth of huge urban centers. The cities with their large populations have enabled the *wolfen* to maintain their secret while providing a hunting ground where they prey on the forgotten in society, derelicts and the old who are not missed when a pack strikes.

The balance is shattered when the precipitous action of one pack results in the grisly deaths of two Brooklyn cops on routine duty in the auto pound. Detectives George Wilson, a veteran of the force, and Becky Neff are assigned to the case. Slowly the evidence leads to the conclusion that a pack of animals are responsible for the murders, but inter-department politics eventually conceal the facts and isolate the two detectives.

The *wolfen* realize Neff and Wilson have discovered their secret and set out to destroy the pair. The action shifts around Manhattan, from desolate tenements to Central Park. The death count rises as the *wolfen* desperately try to kill their prey, while the detectives struggle to get the irrefutable evidence of the beasts' existence before becoming the next victims. The struggle is between two small groups, each representative of their own species, each shifting from hunter to hunted, and each depending on their own distinct weapons and resources.

Streiber has made his characters, both human and animal, admirable within their cultural spheres. His unique contributions to the literature of the genre are his believable and sympathetic two-sided characterizations. Motivation for both men and werewolf are carefully developed and explained by Streiber, resulting in mixed emotions on the part of the reader. This, unfortunately, will be difficult to transfer to the screen, perhaps at the expense of the *wolfen's* intra-pack rivalries and sacrifices, as well as the pervading sense of desperation of the pack, so well conveyed in Streiber's novel.

Warners Brothers, exclusive distributor for Orion's product, has announced that Robert Hitzig and Alan King will produce the film on New York locales. Michael Wadleigh will direct the screenplay by Lawrence D. Cohen, who adapted CARRIE for the screen. □



by Dan Scapperotti

QUATERMASS

Nigel Kneale's QUATERMASS will return to British television screens later this year, thanks to producer Ted Childs and Euston Films, an independent production company associated with the London-based Thames Television. The QUATERMASS series was first produced in England as a television series in the mid-fifties, and proved so popular that three feature films were made. Neither the series nor the features were incredibly successful in America. The filming has just finished on the four 52-minute segments that comprise the new serial under the direction of Piers Haggard. The series was shot in 35mm and Panavision, providing the attractive possibility of a shorter feature version to be released in continental Europe.

The new Professor Quatermass is portrayed by distinguished actor Sir John Mills. In the feature film versions of Kneale's popular television series, Quatermass has been played by American actor Brian Donlevy in THE CREEPING UNKNOWN (1955) and ENEMY FROM SPACE (1957). Andrew Keir filled the role of the eccentric Quatermass in the best of the features, FIVE MILLION YEARS TO EARTH (1967). Co-starring with Mills are Simon McCorkindale, Barbara Kellerman and Margaret Tyzack. Director Haggard is the great-grand nephew of writer Rider Haggard and has directed two features, WEDDING NIGHT (1969) and BLOOD ON SATAN'S CLAW, a modest but effective shocker released in 1971.

"The BBC held the option on this new Nigel Kneale story for two years before they decided to let it go for economy reasons," says Haggard. "They deemed it too expensive to produce. I was not the director then and I have not collaborated at all with Nigel Kneale over script revisions, even though the script itself has gone through a number of rewrites. Euston Films picked it up due to the fact that science fiction seems a certain area at the moment for international marketing. As far as I know, Hammer never had an option on this particular script. Kneale was never satisfied with the film versions of his scripts. He always considered them B-movies. Television is far more suited to his work. The films didn't, or Hammer certainly didn't, bring out the poetry that is inherent in a Kneale story. Kneale is the best science fiction writer in Britain and the Quatermass character is known by millions, so this project is a daunting one but I'm aiming for a piece of popular entertainment which works on more than one level. The science fiction side is entertaining, but my concern is to keep all that fast and effective and be certain that a more complex layer of significance emerges from the characters and a concern for humanity. It's all there and I have to make it as rich an experience as possible."

by Mike Childs and Alan Jones

The film was made on a thirteen week shooting schedule in and around Harefield Hill, a small studio located near Pinewood. The final budget has been set at about $1.4 million. The new QUATERMASS is set in England in 1984. The United States and Russia are about to complete a mammoth "Hands in Space" project. Professor Bernard Quatermass is interrupted while writing his memoirs and reluctantly agrees to leave his Scottish retreat to participate in a global TV coverage of the historic event. He also has another reason in traveling to London—to find his long lost granddaughter. Due to TV and radio censorship, Quatermass is not prepared for the new London and he is shocked to find garbage and dead bodies littering the streets, the city echoing from the machine-gun fire of looters and killer gangs in the aftermath of food and fuel shortages. Just as Quatermass denounces the space project as morally and economically irrelevant, a huge laser beam appears from nowhere and shatters the space research center, and a stunned world accuses Quatermass of complicity in the disaster. A young radio astronomer, Joe Kapp, and his wife Claire take Quatermass to their observatory in an attempt to free him from suspicion. En route, they encounter large numbers of young people who call themselves the Planet People. They are convinced the laser beam is coming again to transport them to another planet, where they are certain that they will be able to lead a Utopian lifestyle. Upon investigation, Quatermass discovers that an alien power is harvesting the youth of Earth for experimentation to find if their form of life can exist on this planet. With the help of the elderly, who have been forced to live underground by the young people, Quatermass fashions a sort of neutron bomb, called the Focal Bomb, which he hopes to deliver to the aliens via their own laser. As the beam approaches Earth, QUATERMASS ends with a big question mark: will the Focal Bomb work?

Kneale, who has a wry instinct to know that the story must be presented realistically, claims "In the fifties, when I was writing these things, it was a fairly optimistic time. But now look at today, we don't have enough gas or food—panic in all directions. It's not the same at all—New York collapsing in black-outs and Ireland dissolving in bombs. Present *that* scene back 15 years, the story of the world as it is now, and it would have been regarded as the wildest of fiction."

Says Haggard: "In a way, what this calamity means to Quatermass is that society is collapsing, and that he's going to die soon. Once again though, humanity needs him, and he is called back hopefully to save the day. Kneale's script is a tremendous reassertion of the importance of people, ordinary people, and how necessary they are in fighting evil. We haven't done all our special effects yet. It's not hugely ambitious in that department. The script does not rely on them but they appear at key points. In no way is this production weighted toward special effects."

The question is—will QUATERMASS have Great Britain glued to their TV sets and be as successful as its 1950's counterpart? "I pray it will," pipes Haggard. "There is talk of programming the series in the ROOTS tradition. If the four parts are televised over four consecutive days, it will be a surefire way of hooking the public." □

Left: John Mills as Quatermass. Right: Mills and director Piers Haggard confer on the set.

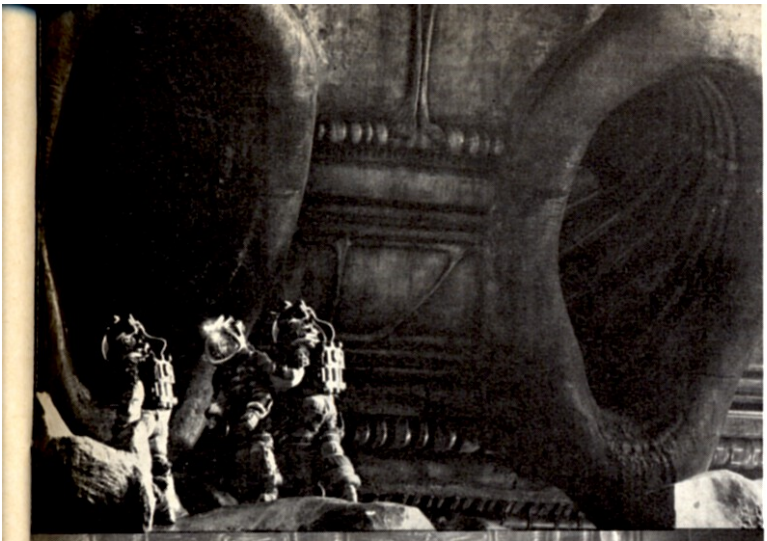


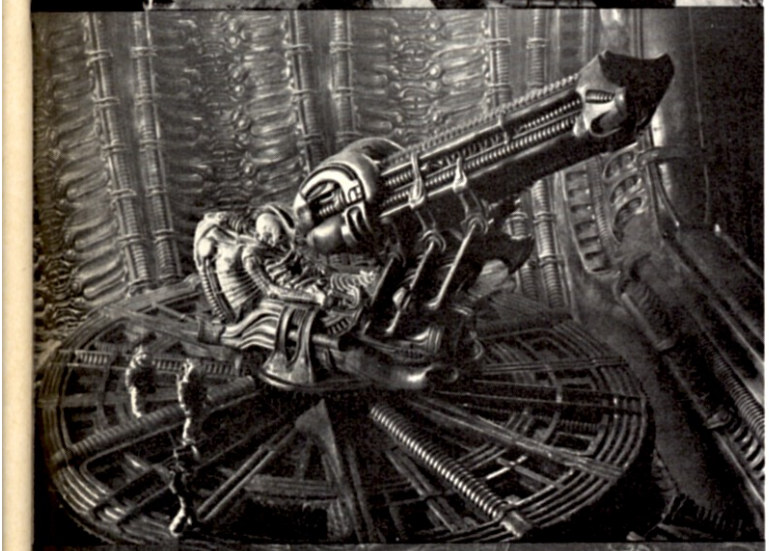
THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK in 1980.

Shooting title of the STAR WARS sequel is THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK, which began filming on March 5 in Finse, Norway, on locations which will double for an ice-covered planet. Directing is Irvin Kershner from a script by Larry Kasdan and the late Leigh Brackett. The recent casting of black actor Billy Dee Williams is a revealing move, executive producer George Lucas' token gesture to those who objected to STAR WARS' lily-white universe. Makeup artist Stuart Freeborn, assisted by his wife and son, is creating a mechanically-operated puppet, described as a three-and-a-half foot tall alien who looks like a "wizened old man, human-like, very ancient and wrinkled." Motivated via a series of offstage wires, this creature is important in teaching Luke Skywalker about the mysteries of "The Force." A miniature land vehicle to be used with animated people inside it is part of the stop motion effects to be supplied by Jon Berg and Phil Tippett. The film will be released by 20th Century-Fox in 1980.

CLASH OF THE TITLES
Harryhausen's Jason by any other name. . .

CLASH OF THE TITANS is the inexplicable title change for PERSEUS AND THE GORGON'S HEAD, now a go project at MGM on a whopping $15 million budget. The new title makes it all sound like one of the those cheap Italian sand-and-sandal epics starring muscleman Steve Reeves, and maybe that is why producer Charles H. Schneer is shelling out most of the film's big-budget for stars like Laurence Olivier (who plays Zeus), Maggie Smith, Claire Bloom and Burgess Meredith—otherwise the public might get confused. Whether there's going to be any money left over to upgrade Harryhausen's effects budget is anyone's guess, but the master of model animation is reportedly looking around for a sorceror's apprentice to take under his wing, to assist in the effects chores and get it all to market a little sooner. Ray reportedly offered the post to Jim Danforth, who declined the honor. Effects include Medusa, the gorgon of the earlier title, and almost certainly Pegasus, the immortal winged horse, her offspring. The screenplay is by classical scholar Beverley Cross, who wrote JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS and the last Sinbad outing, and should provide little for all those prestigious stars to do. The Perseus legend is Jason all over again; the quest this time to kill the dreaded Gorgon; when Atlas fails to join in, he clashes with Perseus and. . .hmm, maybe there's room for Steve Reeves in this after all? Directed by Desmond Davis, filming is now underway in Spain, Italy and Malta, with interiors at London's Pinewood Studios, for release by United Artists in 1981.









ALIEN

ALIEN is set in the 21st century, where man is exploring planets outside his solar system. The cargo transport Nostromo, described in the script as resembling a huge oil refinery, intercepts an alien distress call and sets down on an uncharted planet. An accident on the planet's surface injures one of the Nostromo crew (John Hurt), and he is returned to the craft with a large parasitic creature attached to his head. Kept alive by an oxygen tube inserted by the parasite into Hurt's lungs, the alien thrives on the man's internal organs.

Dan O'Bannon (DARK STAR) conceived of and wrote the original story on which ALIEN is based with Ronald Shusett. "My story has been rewritten twice now, first by Walter Hill and then by David Giler. Both versions are different in many ways from my original script, but retain the same basic plot elements. One interesting thing happened when Hill came in to work on my script. He said to me, 'My strength is that I don't know anything about science fiction.' I never understood what he meant by that. It makes me nervous, though. These people literally go back to step one, ignoring all that has happened in sf literature since the thirties. They are making the same mistakes sf writers were making decades ago. If all you know about science fiction is STAR WARS, then all you can possibly do is rewrite STAR WARS." One original concept that O'Bannon had established in his first script was that of three alien cultures. Two of them, the Earth culture and the super-advanced alien culture, are retained in the Hill/Giler rewrites. A third, more primitive extraterrestrial society, was thought too complicated and was dropped.

Various attempts to pry the parasite from Hurt's face prove useless. One of the creature's pseudopods is lopped off in an experiment, bleeding acid strong enough to drill through three bulkheads before dissipating. The scientist is in excruciating pain, yet survives. The culetic blob eventually dries up and retracts, falling to the floor dead. Hurt regains his composure and, to the astonishment of his peers, seems perfectly normal. Later at dinner, he drinks some water and heaves. He collapses just aside the table, and from inside his chest an embryo, implanted by the parasite, struggles through the bone and skin, literally eating its way out of the man's body. Leaving a bloody trail, it scampers into the Nostromo's lower hull.

The Alien is next seen full-grown, a hulking, man-like horror, wandering the ship, ready to strike. The humans begin their search for it, and one by one become victims. The monster rends its prey to a bloody pulp; one engineer is revealed to be an android when his head is ripped off; one is fried by a flame-thrower meant for the creature. Tom Skerritt (as Nostromo captain Dallas) is encased in a coccoon spun from the monster's epidermis, and begs for someone to kill him. The surviving scientist (Sigourney Weaver) boards a shuttlecraft and launches herself, detonating the Nostromo when in deep space. But the Alien has, predictably, been hiding on the shuttlecraft, and the chase resumes. Weaver hides in a utility locker; then, donning a spacesuit, depressurizes the cabin. While the creature examines an animal specimen, Weaver stabs it in the back, its potent, searing blood melting through the ship's floor. Somehow the creature is sucked out of the shuttle (a la GOLDFINGER), yet manages to attach itself to the outer hull. When it commences to eat its way back inside, Weaver applies the ship's rear thrusters and burns it to a crisp.

O'Bannon is concerned over the $8 million budget for the film. "The script I'd done was meant to be produced for no more than a half-million dollars. With the money Fox has slapped down, it seems that now they might have *too much* money." O'Bannon went to England last April to work on the film's special effects, but soon after returned to the states. He was replaced in the production by Nick Allder (SPACE: 1999), who completed visual effects design for director Ridley Scott, highly visual director contracted on the strength of his first film, THE DUELLISTS.

The story's visceral energy and Fox's willingness to tout the film as a surefire success, even in light of the boxoffice inhibitive R-rating, conjures up a bravery that most had assumed lost in film producing. ALIEN represents a coming together of two genre characteristics, kept apart until now only by time: the innocent fifties monster picture and, at the other end of the spectrum, the labored violence and gore of the post-EXORCIST era. On May 25, when the film is released, the mature and adult science fiction film may become a viable commercial reality. □

Top and Bottom: Shots of the Nostromo crew investigating the deserted hull of the alien spaceship, designed by Swiss artist H. R. Giger. 2: The skeletal remains of a huge alien, seated at a monstrous telescope. 3: Kane (John Hurt) inside the alien vessel's hatchery, surrounded by leathery "eggs."

by Jeffrey Frentzen



Director Ridley Scott.

MURDER BY DECREE



Bob Clark directs Genevieve Bujold

MURDER BY DECREE is the latest entry into the Conan Doyle territory, by co-producer/director Bob Clark and producers Len Herberman and Rene Dupont. With a $5 million budget, the film tells the story of Holmes and Watson on the trail of that other non-fiction Victorian phenomenon, Jack the Ripper. A possible controversy has come up regarding the film's release in Britain, over the fact that the British Broadcasting Company funded the project with the initial "seed" money in return for all television rights after three years. This may result in the film being boycotted in England, as no theatrical film can be shown on television until five years after its release date. Additionally, another genre film utilizing the Jack the Ripper character, TIME AFTER TIME, will be released later this year, offering similar subject matter in competition to MURDER BY DECREE. Director Bob Clark, however, was eager to talk and defend his film, which opened in the states in March to brisk boxoffice.

The film stars Christopher Plummer as Holmes, James Mason as Dr. Watson, Donald Sutherland as Robert Lees, Frank Finlay as Lestrade, Sir John Gielgud as Lord Salisbury, Genevieve Bujold, Susan Clark, Anthony Quayle and David Hemmings.

When MURDER BY DECREE was first announced, it was under the title SHERLOCK HOLMES AND SAUCY JACK. What made you change the title ?

Everyone hated that title. In England, even though that's what he was called at the time, it has a slightly comic meaning. In the States, no one had any idea what it meant, which I actually considered to be a plus because they would have to ask. MURDER BY DECREE gives just enough away and it does invoke a response.

Sherlock Holmes movies have not done that well at the box office recently. We are thinking in particular of THE PRIVATE LIFE OF SHERLOCK HOLMES and THE SEVEN PER-CENT SOLUTION.

I was told that THE SEVEN PER-CENT SOLUTION did well. They were talking about a sequel. I think the mistake with Holmes is that people always play him tongue-in-cheek, as in THE SEVEN PER-CENT SOLUTION, over-emphasizing his cocaine habit and sex life. People aren't really interested in that. We're playing it extremely realistically. Holmes is heroic, honest and very straight forward. Perhaps it is not that Holmesian either. The relationship between the two men isn't being developed. Watson is not going to be the moron who always steps behind the super-detective, nor will Holmes be depreciatingly superior. He'll be a very human figure. Also, naturally, I think we have a very good story which will make this film a success.

by Mike Childs and Alan Jones

Why did you choose John Hopkins to write the script ?

We had to have an English writer seeing as the film was produced under an Anglo-Canadian pact. It was either John or Anthony Shaffer, but I met John in New York and I liked him—and as it turned out we had a great rapport. There were six re-writes in all as we kept changing the story. I first came up with the story when I heard about the theory that the Ripper was the Duke of Clarence. But that theory was soon discredited and the theories that we followed are later ones. Jack the Ripper is not the whole point behind the plot, but who is trying to hinder Holmes' investigation. Radicals and Socialists are helping him, Monarchist organizations are trying to stop him and a couple of secret societies are involved, all, I must add, based on facts. It is more an adventure/intrigue than horror. The horror story evolves into a CHINATOWN or Watergate situation. There won't be much blood as we're going in for terror. Actually there is very rarely any blood in my films, even though people don't believe that. People love murder mysteries and this will be subtler than most.

What about your other films, BLACK CHRISTMAS, CHILDREN SHOULDN'T PLAY WITH DEAD THINGS and DEAD OF NIGHT ?

I love CHILDREN SHOULDN'T PLAY WITH DEAD THINGS because I really know what it took to accomplish that. I think Alan Ormsby, who worked on it with me, is an extraordinarily talented guy as well as a good writer. We'd gone to college together. By the way, I produced DERANGED but I did not put my name on the credits because, at the time, I had other things happening and I didn't want people to think that I couldn't direct and produce anything other than horror movies. I wanted to break from the genre so I wouldn't be stuck in it forever. Even though, I hastily add, I like it. I actually thought they did a very good job on DERANGED, it was an original piece of work.

BLACK CHRISTMAS has always been accused of being a cheat, but it was a bloody honest ending, saying, "look, we don't know who the killer is." He was not anybody in the film to my mind but his identity invoked an enormous response. Some theories sent to us were very convincing. There was one for every character in the film. None of them really hold up though as not one character in the film could have done it unless you cheat somewhere along the line. There were obscurations but no cheats. No clues were given. He was an unseen, unknown, of this Earth, homicidal maniac. It was always to be an unknown presence. In retrospect that was a mistake. The audience wanted the gratification of a pleasant ending. That really isn't important, but what I hadn't counted on was that the Olivia Hussey character had deserved and earned the right to live. Left alone in the house with the maniac was a bit hard to take. I think BLACK CHRISTMAS is an okay entry for the PSYCHO/shocker genre.

DEAD OF NIGHT (television syndicated the film as DEATH-DREAM) is surely my favorite because we never tried to make a statement about Vietnam. We stayed within the genre at all times. It was original and fresher than anything else I'd done up to that point. I went for an ominous feel. Andy Brooks (the soldier killed in Vietnam who returns home as a zombie because his mother prays for it) was a definitive metaphor for the war—but it was a very benign film. Although the movie is technically flawed, it had a simple visual originality. I worked on the frame-within-a-frame theory. I had people in doors, in mirrors, in windows, all to create an impression of entrapment. The family were always around the staircase in a way that it enveloped the surroundings.

After BLACK CHRISTMAS I was offered a lot of films along the same lines. I was going to do a film for Warners, PREY, a John Carpenter script, but it was cancelled due to casting problems.

Are you familiar with a film called A STUDY IN TERROR, directed by James Hill in 1964? It has a theme similar to MURDER BY DECREE.

I didn't even realize it had existed until I found out Frank Finley had been in it. I'd heard it was an above-average film, but when I saw it by and large I was quite disappointed. It has not stood the test of time. The techniques were very Hammer and obviously someone had pretensions for it to aim higher than that. I'm told the director left the film due to the fact that he was told he would have a lot of money to do it, but ultimately he didn't and he had to compromise. It clearly belongs in the genre and does not rise above it.

What about the move from low budget features to the larger budgets you have now ?

Well, it's still the same pressure. All it means really is you have higher paid stars and more value goes up on the screen. It isn't hard at all. Our designer has done an incredible job on the sets, they add even more production value than I could ever possibly calculate. We have done as much location as you can in modern day London. We had to build the East End docks as they no longer exist in the Victorian state.

Top: Christopher Plummer as detective Sherlock Holmes. Middle: Holmes and Watson (James Mason) in gaslit London. Bottom: Watson, Lestrade (Frank Finley) and Holmes inspect the latest victim of Jack the Ripper.

What about working with such an impressive cast ?

Well, I spent time with Plummer and Mason as I thought I'd be awed when shooting began, but they expect to be directed and I'm delighted to be the one who has to direct them. I first wanted either Olivier or Mason to portray Watson but I can only say that it is for the good of the film that James agreed to do it. I thought of Peter O'Toole originally for Holmes, and he was scheduled, but it was one of those questions of timing. Chris Plummer was my second choice, and he is superb at putting across all the warmth and concern I envisioned for the character. Each one of the actors contributed to the final good of the film. Bujold is the best young actress working today. She is astonishing, and what she does here is really memorable. David Hemmings is a terrific actor and he is getting much better with age. Finlay gets great mileage out of a small role. Susan Clark manages a fabulous Irish accent—and what more can you say about working with Gielgud ? It was a joy. Films are ultimately about people, people who give off sparks, and these actors give off something more than that.

What about the Holmes societies and all the Conan Doyle purists, do you think they will like the film ?

The purists will like this Holmes and Watson very much. To my surprise I found out that the Holmes fans actually liked the Basil Rathbone films even though Watson was a complete departure from the way that Conan Doyle had written him, but then they're not that respectful of the writer anyway because he disclaimed his characters. When I found that out, I realized the purists will be pleased with this interpretation, because Chris Plummer is doing a much more intelligent and fatherly Holmes. Holmes deduces a lot psychologically, he doesn't do all this, "The mud upon his boots and the large wart on his nose tell me. . ." nonsense. He is far truer to the spirit of Holmes, but then of course you can't please everybody.

If MURDER BY DECREE does well do you have a sequel planned ?

Not as yet. If the film is to be successful, as we think it is, it will depend mostly on whether the main actors want to do it again and if we get as good a story as MURDER BY DECREE. I truly believe that the public will go and see a film if it is a good story, told directly and honestly with a cast of exciting people. It's strange, but Holmes outside the movies does incredibly well, he's big business, but not in the movies as yet. I really believe it is because they have not treated him with the respect he deserves. □







Ken Russell to direct ALTERED STATES

Fast becoming one of the most difficult films to get started in recent years, the screen version of Paddy Chayefsky's ALTERED STATES is finally off the ground. Production began on March 23, with producer Howard Gottfried signing Ken Russell (TOMMY, THE DEVILS) to replace Arthur Penn as director, after Penn suffered "creative differences" with Chayefsky. Penn reportedly could not handle the film's preliminary special effects supervision. The project was first announced by Columbia Pictures last summer. Story involves a scientist experimenting with the reactions of man's conscious mind in a claustrophobic plywood and aluminum isolation tank. While in Mexico he investigates the properties of an hallucinatory drug used by an Indian tribe. He takes it back to the states to use on himself while in the isolation tank. However, the effect of the peyote-like drug is intensified by the increased pressure and bouyancy in the tank, causing his body to begin altering physically as well as genetically.

Master makeup artist Dick Smith and special effects technician John Dykstra were hired early in the preproduction phase to handle the elaborate special effects. Smith will construct special appliances for a scene of a man's arm shriveling into what resembles an animal's paw. Other visual effects include shots of the scientist as he changes into a proto-human creature, exploding and synthesizing into a mass of half-human, half-liquid energy. In February, for no definite reason, Dykstra was axed from the production. He was intended to supervise the surreal special effects.

To top all else, two weeks before filming was to begin, Columbia president Frank Price decided to drop the film from its production lineup. The elaborate special effects design was driving the budget from $12 million to an incredible $19 million. Columbia sold the property to Warner Brothers, who has repaid Columbia for all preproduction costs. Warners will release the film in 1980. *Marc Finkel*

Christopher Lee's AN ARABIAN ADVENTURE

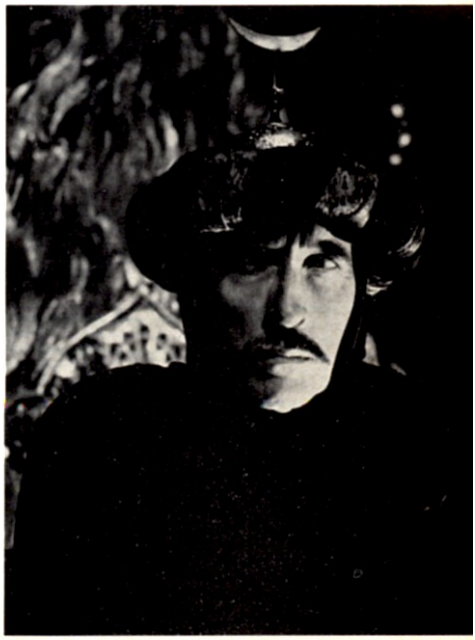
August 18. 1978 was Christopher Lee's first day on the set of ARABIAN ADVENTURE, reuniting him with Peter Cushing. Lee plays Alquazar, an evil sorcerer who rules the city of Jadur, based at the foot of a magic mountain wherein lies the secret of his practices—The Mirror of the Moon. Alquazar's occult powers are formidable, but to attain total power over his subjects he needs the magic of a legendary rose plucked only by one who is pure and honest. AN ARABIAN ADVENTURE is based on an original screenplay by Brian Hayles, who also wrote WARLORDS OF ATLANTIS. Lee spoke of this new film, future projects, and past successes in his Pinewood Studios dressing room.

"ARABIAN ADVENTURE is absolute fantasy, a mixture of legend, the Arabian Nights and pantomime. This is a tremendously fun picture. It has all the classic ingredients, the crafty Caliph, the beautiful princess, the handsome prince, flying carpets and a genie in a bottle. It is not meant to be taken as a major contribution to the history of the cinema but, as you can see from the sets, it will be well done. I'm playing it straight despite the underlying comedy elements—my character has to be played that way.

"I think *Saturday Night Live*, which I did in New York, is probably one of the most important things that has happened to me in my whole career. It was all comedy and, even though the James Bond and Sherlock Holmes skits were taken out because of running time, I still played Henry Higgins, Death and Van Helsing. They have asked me to go back and do it again. It is probably the most meaningful thing that has happened to me in years as far as the American scene is concerned.

"I am planning to do a musical called MEPHISTOPHOLES, a rock musical to a certain extent, and a contemporary version of Faust. I will play and sing the part of Mephistopholes, who attempts to take over the world, manipulating a young man placed in a position of great power. Mace Neufield (THE OMEN) will be producing it." Although Lee's career has seemingly taken off, his choice to play in AN ARABIAN ADVENTURE would appear a questionable one. The film is quite obviously trying to invade Ray Harryhausen territory, with its *Arabian Nights* atmosphere, and may emerge a kind of SINBAD film without a Sinbad; or worse, a SINBAD film without Ray Harryhausen. □

Christopher Lee



by Mike Childs and Alan Jones

LETTERS

With regard to your comments at the end of your review of THE WIZ [8:1:22], it is time someone corrected the rumors about Universal's attempt to remake KING KONG. Despite its faults, the DeLaurentiis film could at least be viewed as a somewhat better than average man-in-a-monkey-suit film since it was updated, had different characters, and some variations of the basic plot. But the Universal film would have been a *literal* remake, based on Delos W. Lovelace's novelization, set in 1933 and with the same characters. To script their film, they chose Bo Goldman, a then-hot playwright who wrote the screenplay for ONE FLEW OVER THE CUCKOO'S NEST.

Typical of the elements introduced by Goldman was the making of a complete and dastardly villain out of Denham who, at the film's end, is in one of the planes attempting to shoot down Kong. Ann is first depicted as showing her gratitude to Denham by going to bed with him during the trip to Skull Island. Only later does she switch her affections to Driscoll (a tryst between Ann and Driscoll is implied in the Lovelace novelization). The novelization also describes Driscoll as young, but the Goldman script ages him to the mid-to-late thirties. Universal intended to cast Peter Falk as Denham, as believable a choice for a documentary filmmaker as Franklin Pangborn.

In one respect, it might have been a better film than DeLaurentiis' fiasco: the visual effects of Albert Whitlock and Bill Taylor. I saw some tests they did with body-builder Franco Columbu in a *white* gorilla suit (typical of Universal's thinking) which suggested that Whitlock had successfully achieved a color equivalent to the Dore-inspired look of the original. Unfortunately, he was not designing the entire picture.

RICK MITCHELL
Universal City CA 91608

I was incensed by Ralph Bakshi's pompous and ludicrous justifications for his use of the rotoscope process in LORD OF THE RINGS [8:1:33]. To make an entirely rotoscoped film and then acclaim its superior realism, attention to detail, and its honesty is the height of self-serving hypocrisy.

Bakshi complains that rotoscoping "in the past has been used in a few scenes only." But that is as it should be! Fleischer, Disney and others used it successfully for humorous or stylistic effect but always kept it to a minimum because basically it is an artistic cop-out. In tracing frame-by-frame over previously shot live-action footage, the animator is unable to convey anything through the facial expressions or body language of the animated characters that has not already been dictated by the actors. The exaggeration and/or stylization of physical movement which is at the heart of animation is sacrificed for a slavish devotion to realism.

Bakshi may have covered up his live-action film with a lot of ink, cel-paint and elaborate backgrounds, but the final result, despite his pontificating, is *not* an animated film. It is a bastardization of a marvelous art and a gross insult to all true animators and to those of us who appreciate the creativity, skill, painstaking labor, endurance and love that goes into a *real* animated film.

PATRICIA REYNOSO
San Francisco CA 94113

I fail to understand why your magazine panned BATTLESTAR GALACTICA [8:1:17]. The program literally reeks of symbolism. Consider when Commander Adama declared the marriage between Apollo and Serena "sealed," the bride wore a costume reminiscent of Saran Wrap. The show's allegorical nature is exemplified by Commander Adama, a personality alternating from the pragmatism of Captain Kirk to the mysticism of a tribal priest who chucks virgins into a volcano. Also foolish is overlooking its educational value. I had never realized that a lost civilization provided us with rivets and words like "went forth." The show is about voids, told in a style that is appropriately empty.

CHRISTOPHER MARTIN
St. Clair Shores MI 48083

Stephen King's memories of the film THE MAZE [8:1:14] require some clarification. The frog-like appearance of "The First Lord of Craven Castle" was due to his not having developed beyond the amphibian stage while in the womb (as was briefly explained in the last reel). There was no man-into-frog (or frog-into-man) transformation and no lily pad—which would indeed have been as ludicrous as King thought it was. The gimmick, while not really plausible, was intelligently handled.

M. RUSSELL
Los Angeles CA 90034

Despite what is stated in your review of MARTIN [8:1:16], the fact is that the film was indeed a 16mm original. Associated with that origin is the unfortunate reality of the image degradation through increased grain structure and contrast-build in 35mm. Nonetheless, I'm sorry you found the image quality lacking. I only hope you might someday have the opportunity to view a "quality" print.

MIKE GORNICK
Cinematographer, Latent Image
Pittsburgh PA 15222

As regards the two reviews you have printed on MARTIN [7:2:32 and 8:1:16], I feel that Romero purposefully makes Martin's nature ambiguous to give the film significant, thought provoking aspects. Romero's exploration of the 20th century adolescent as vampire and not mere bloodthirsty psychopath is a rich and relevant topic. As a thematic continuation of NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD, Romero further illustrates the "claustrophobia of reality." Who but the adolescent is more sensitive to the pressures to control and conformity? Indeed, the teenager's norm is often close to the intense mood swings we consider crazy. Martin's story is that of a journey through the withdrawn, cynical and angry feelings of adolescence, and his push outwards towards real communication. Martin as vampire avoids life by avoiding the risk of a living interaction with a female. He must drug them and sex cannot be rejected as it also cannot be fulfilled. He has the vampire's control in his hypodermic needle. Martin as adolescent struggles with the complexity of his environment, rejecting the simplistic old explanations of Tata Cuda's magic. He does not reject but insists on his vampirism and is furious at his uncle's garlic and crosses. His best attempt at communicating falls flat on the radio talk show, as he is exploited for his weirdness.

I don't think that MARTIN is "a dark and hopeless" film. Romero certainly sees normal life as bleak and hopeless yet Martin cuts through it all and, with Mrs. Santini, breaks out of his shell and pursues the real communication he feels is so lacking in the world. When Mrs. Santini commits suicide and Martin is killed unjustly, we again confront Romero's overall irony of life. But only if Martin never tried to reach out would this film be hopeless. After all, Romero never promises rewards for good intentions or happy endings of any kind. Martin does the best with what has been dealt him, and who is to say that his death is not a reward? The peace of eternal rest.

DENNIS DUNN
Long Beach NY 11561

You've already done justice to FORBIDDEN PLANET in an earlier issue [4:1:4], and the prospect of not another article but a double issue seems doubly foolish and certainly unnecessary (it is the most overrated science fiction film, after all). Your intention to make much of this film indicates a preference for films that are (or were) very "big," very flashy and very empty. It's disappointing for a magazine that once profiled films like THESE ARE THE DAMNED, PORTRAIT OF JENNIE—even I MARRIED A MONSTER FROM OUTER SPACE!

I'm reserving judgment on whether your PRIMEVALS series will also be too much about too little. And after your experience in covering LOGAN'S RUN, I'm surprised you haven't chosen a more cautious approach.

DAVID J. BALSOM
West Linn OR 97068

There comes a point where an attention-seeking critic will totally overstep his limited knowledge of a subject and/or film and will put





Cartoon by Chris Kinsinger

forth an analysis which is obviously and deeply in error. The most rankling example of late is in Steven Dimeo's misinterpretation of THE FURY[7:3:62], certainly one of the best genre films of 1978.

It was either Shaw or H. R. Mencken who said that a good critic must first be a good writer. Dimeo is neither. He seems to think it's a critic's job to hate movies; as a corollary, he thinks that the way to pan a film is to ridicule it down to every detail. He's in love with his own words—or wordiness ("...happy happenstances happen..."), also managing to throw in the term *deux ex machina* so we'll know he's taken Sophomore Lit. Most tellingly of all, Dimeo makes endless errors of objectivity as well as of judgment. Gillian doesn't give her good friend a cerebral hemorrhage deliberately; she is unable to control her power, wherein lies her distress. She even backs away from her mother at times, remember? Robin doesn't sabotage the Arab-bearing carousel just to work off jealous steam, but because, so far as he knows, his dad was killed by Arabs. The smoke (not "mist") in the room comes from a serving cart which slammed into the fireplace moments before. I could go on, but I trust you've got the idea. Mr. Dimeo is trying to convince me that the film is crummy, while last March Brian DePalma *showed* me that it is excellent.

LYNDON JOSLIN
Houston TX 77074

While your double issues devoted to STAR WARS and CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND were both interesting and entertaining, neither can be considered comprehensive. Both issues failed to make mention of the contribution by composer John Williams and his excellent film scores for both films. The Motion Picture Academy saw fit to award him an Oscar for STAR WARS. He deserved some recognition from your magazine as well.

PETER ELLIOTT BRADLEY
Hayward CA 94541

I must question devoting so much space recently to THE WICKER MAN [6:3:4]. I have no doubt of the film's worth, but the entire issue cheats your readers in what I see as a rather selfish move, the star-maker drive on your part. You seem determined to be the hero in the battle against the "system," and to make THE WICKER MAN an instant classic, although virtually none of your readers have seen it. They must form an opinion solely on your say so. This kind of cinematic snobbery also typifies many other film journals. You see yourselves as the holders of the truth and see everyone else as the "unenlighted masses."

JOHN THONEN, JR.
Independence MO 64052

[*THE WICKER MAN* has *been released theatrically in this country, opening in San Francisco on January 5, followed by Portland and Los Angeles openings in March. After the Los Angeles premiere, the film appeared in weekly* Variety's Top-50 Grossing Films *column throughout March. Future openings are scheduled by "Summerisle Films," actually distributor Ron Weinberg and Specialty Films of Seattle.*]

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STAR TREK
THE MOTION PICTURE

Gene Roddenberry embarks on a new Enterprise.

Monitor station Epsilon 9, located on a distant perimeter of the Federation star system, transmits an alarming message to Starfleet headquarters in San Francisco. Three powerful Klingon cruisers, patrolling their own territory, have been confronted by an unknown alien intruder whose superior might so overpowered the Klingon warships that each was destroyed instantly, virtually without resistence. And the hostile intruder is now entering Federation space at Warp 7 speed on a direct heading toward Earth.

Two years have passed since the *Enterprise* completed its five-year exploratory mission. Since then, the massive starship has been in orbiting dry dock being completely refitted and rebuilt. Now, with the finest weapons system in the fleet, the *Enterprise* is hastily ordered back into service to meet the onrushing threat. Captain James T. Kirk, since promoted to rear admiral and given a desk job at Starfleet Command, is called upon to revert to his previous grade and command the Federation vessel on its crucial rechristening mission. To provide maximum continuity, the rest of his former crew is also called back into action.

Barely familiar with the ship's newer equipment and weaponry, the 430-man crew heads off at warp speed to intercept the most destructive alien power ever to confront the Federation.

And so begins STAR TREK—THE MOTION PICTURE, the long-awaited feature film based on the NBC television series which, after three seasons, was dropped by the network—amidst a barrage of viewer protest ultimately sustaining the show through nearly a decade of syndicated reruns.

For years, Trekkies followed persistent rumors of STAR TREK's possible revival as a television series or feature production. As far back as 1974, producer Gene Roddenberry, who shares rights to STAR TREK with Paramount, was engaged by the studio to prepare a feature rendition of the seemingly ever-popular teleseries. The resulting script, however, was rejected. Several other science fiction writers prepared subsequent unaccepted proposals. Then, in 1976, Paramount hired Chris Bryant and Allan Scott to write a script which began to make headway, even though Roddenberry and the studio acknowledged that many rewrites, possibly by multiple writers, would probably be needed before it was sufficiently refined.

By February of the following year, prospects were looking good. Gerald Isenberg was selected as executive producer for the film, which would be made in England with a budget estimated between $8.5 to $10 million. A production manager was assigned and preliminary design work was begun. Philip Kaufman was hired to direct, and negotiations were begun to recruit the original cast members. All that was needed was Paramount's final go-ahead, and production would begin late in 1977, with release timed for Christmas of 1978.

Then, late in May, Paramount changed its collective mind once again and the feature was scrapped. Instead, STAR TREK would be revived as a television series, distributed on a straight syndication basis similar to the one which kept the original 79 episodes near the top of the ratings charts for almost a decade. R. W. Goodwin and Harold Livingston would produce the series for executive producer Roddenberry, and Paramount officials reported the new STAR TREK would be the most expensive television series ever aired. Plans were to begin shooting a two-hour opener in November (for telecast in April), to be followed by one-hour weekly segments.

After months of delays and studio silence, Paramount announced a press conference (7:2:35). STAR TREK was once again in a feature film mode—a $15 million spectacular directed by Robert Wise, which would reunite the entire cast from the television series.

Principal photography began on August 7, 1978, but quickly slipped behind on its projected twelve-week shooting schedule. By Thanksgiving, the latest estimate was for a mid-January completion, with many months of post-production special effects photography to follow before the Christmas '79 premiere. Gene Roddenberry, however, was bouyant and undeterred.

After a television career which has been highlighted by only one major success, how does it feel to be bringing your most popular creation back on the big screen and with a big budget ?

Very exciting. But it was so difficult getting it back, and there had been so many disappointments along the way, that when it finally happened it took me a month or so to realize it. I suppose it wasn't until we were well into shooting and I saw the budget figures reach a point where Paramount couldn't afford to turn back that I said, "Well, maybe we're finally going to do it." The exciting thing about it is that we have an opportunity to do things we could only dream about when we were doing the television show. We can take time with our characters; we can reshoot lines and moments so they really work; and we can have proper opticals.

I guess my biggest fear was that it would not be STAR TREK. I knew I couldn't go into a major picture with a fine director like Robert Wise and say to him, "Don't change *anything*." But at the same time, we had to ask ourselves, "What are the things that made STAR TREK what it was that we *don't* want to change ?" That was a very tenuous and narrow path to walk, but I think we've done it successfully. I've seen some of the film cut together now; and yeah, it *is* the *Enterprise*. It looks better because we can afford to make it look better, but it's still the *Enterprise*. It's still Captain Kirk, still Spock, and I'm very pleased now.

What were those elements from the television series that you tried to retain ?

Mainly the characters. Almost from the beginning we decided that we wanted to keep our characters intact; because we felt that in a time when the anti-hero seems most popular, we wanted to keep the old-fashioned type of heroes—people with great integrity. I personally feel that people tend to do what they see; and if you make integrity fashionable, I think maybe we could get rid of a lot of our problems.

Bob Wise and I both believe that a story ought to be about people; and it doesn't matter whether it's set in the future, or in the past, or in the present. So we've put the same amount of effort into the movie as we did in the television show to make sure that the crew are alive. We didn't design this picture as a vehicle for spectacular opticals. We will *have* spectacular opticals,

On the new, renovated Enterprise bridge, larger than the TV series original, designed by Richard Taylor. Left to right: director Robert Wise, producer Gene Roddenberry, William Shatner (Captain Kirk), DeForrest Kelley (Dr. McCoy), and Leonard Nimoy (Mr. Spock).

Interview by Don Shay



"I couldn't go into a major picture with a fine director like Robert Wise and say, 'Don't change anything.' But at the same time, we had to ask ourselves, 'What are the things that made STAR TREK what it was that we don't want to change?' That was a very narrow path to walk, but I think we've done it successfully."

but they will be there because they affect the people in the show. If you believe that there are real people there and can identify with them, then you can believe the rest.

How about the changes ?

Well, there were lots of small things—like haircuts. Do we keep the same haircut ? And in the end we decided to, because if we started getting loose on that, we'd end up with 1970-ish haircuts. So we went back to that original. Then there was the emblem. Everyone wanted to put it on its side, and I said, "No, look. Let's hold out on that—change more meaningful things." And it was like that just day by day.

We were tempted to keep the same costumes; but then, as we looked at them more carefully and imagined them on widescreen, they were a bit too colorful and flambouyant. Things *do* look different up there than they do on the low definition of a TV tube. Bill Theiss, who was our original costume designer, wasn't available—he was doing another movie at the time—so we had Robert Fletcher come in, and he's done a fine job on our costumes.

The major change you'll be conscious of is the *Enterprise* looks a little different. I mean, it looks a little better. We took a look at the whole form—the shape—and decided to rake the pylons holding the nacelles back somewhat, changing just slightly the bulk of the saucer as opposed to the star drive section. Nobody's likely to get up there with a ruler and see the difference, but I think it just looks better. Our model, which was built by Magicam, is just a little over eight feet long, but is much more detailed than the original TV model which was about eleven feet. And of course, since we start our picture with the *Enterprise* having been in dry dock for two years getting refit and rebuilt, that covers any of the changes we've made.

It also covers the fact that the bridge looks different—better. Our original bridge, on a television budget, was mainly two-by-four and plyboard with a lot of instruments that we scavenged. We couldn't afford to design them for TV. We knew generally what was happening in computers at the time, but the world wasn't very computerized then. As a matter of fact, we had to carve our own computer buttons. Well, now you can go to a drugstore and for $19.95 buy a better-looking computer panel than we had on the original show. So, when we redid the bridge, we had to make it look a lot better. And it looks much more harmonious. Bob Wise, who has a marvelous eye for what looks good on the screen, brought a head-piece into our bridge—a ceiling—that comes down and gives it a more compact look.

I'm sure there are a few purists who'll say, "If you change *anything* I'll hate it"—but I'm personally very pleased with the changes we've made, and I think the fans will be, too.

What other sets have you incorporated into the film ?

Well, for one thing, we wanted to show that the *Enterprise* is as big inside as it is out. And with 70mm photography we can show the enormous size of the vessel in a way we were never able to do before. When we come up and find that thing in dry dock, it's going to look its real size. And you're going to see little human figures in spacesuits, that look half an inch tall, working on this incredible thing. Then, on the inside of the vessel, we're going to show some similar vistas. Where on television we were limited to showing one floor, our engine room, for example, now stretches several stories in both directions. And we have a sequence in the ship's recreation deck that's so big that we used some three-hundred extras.

We also have the San Francisco Starfleet set and a Vulcan set. We did a little location work at Yellowstone for our Vulcan scene—some rocks and steam and things like that—and then we're integrating it into our studio work. We're using the location footage with our characters in it, and then putting all the rest of our Vulcan background in optically. In San Francisco, we shot plates of the bay and the hills, but even these plates are being repainted and changed so we don't see today's housing and whatnot. We wanted to show an optimistic future in which humans have learned some affection for their planet and no longer scar the surface of it with houses and buildings. A great deal of life is underground. In San Francisco, three-hundred years from now, you'll see huge groves of trees that have grown up and the water will be crystal clear—kind of nice place to be.

I understand that you've received a lot of cooperation and assistance from the aerospace industries.

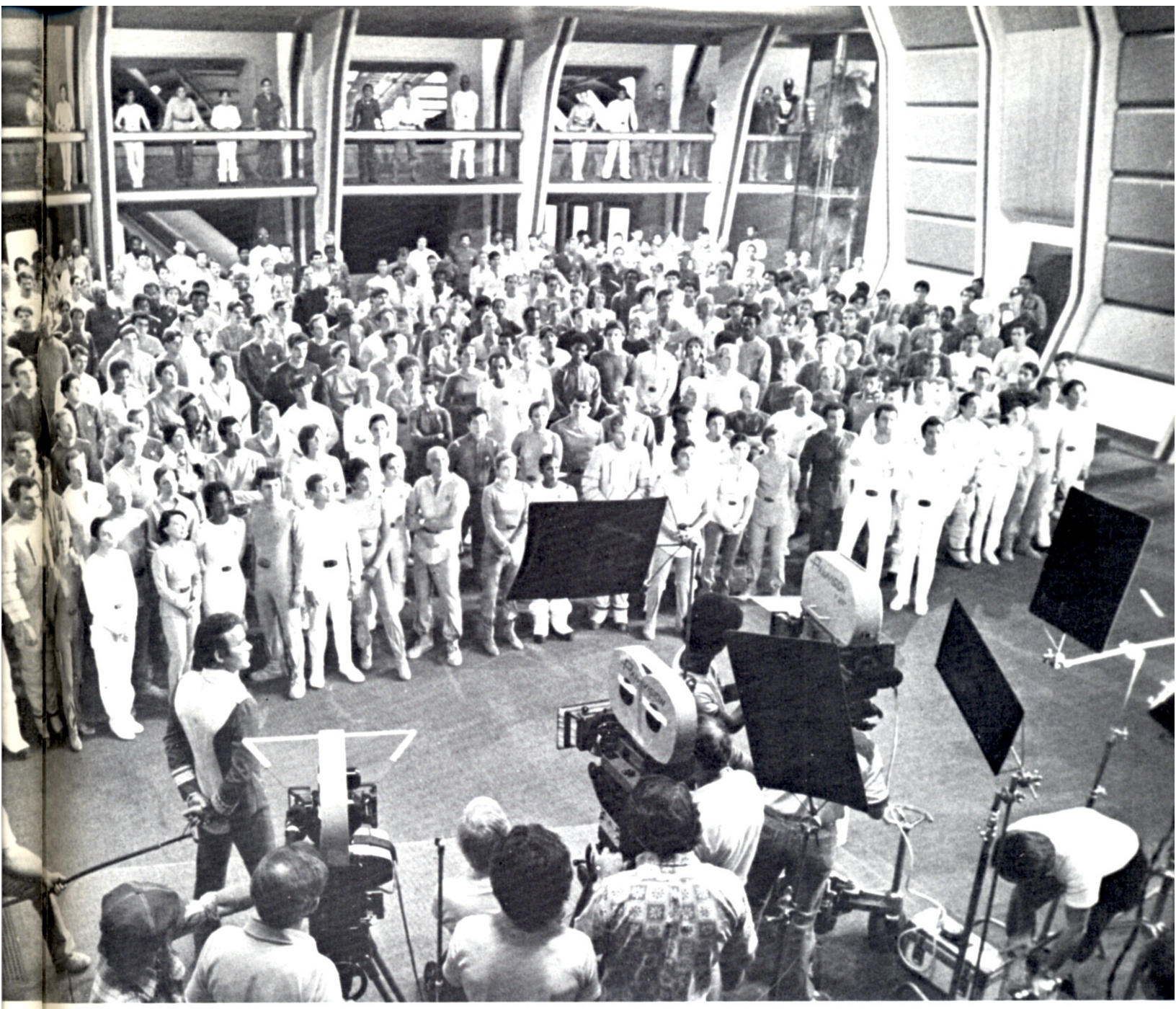
Yes. We found that these places are all full of STAR TREK fans—even in upper echelons now—and they were willing to open their doors and give us advice and assistance in just about any way they could. Earlier, we thought that we might make an arrangement for some of them to actually build some of our things; and they would have been willing to do it in exchange for having their corporate logo on the equipment. I believe they did something like that in 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY. It would have been a great savings to us. But we discovered we were so far ahead in STAR TREK—three-hundred years ahead—that it was better for us to fabricate them ourselves, because industry today still fabricates with easily-seen welds and bolts and things that we didn't want. So finally, with their advice, we designed and built all our own.

To what extent did STAR WARS and the resurgence of science fiction films affect Paramount's decision to finally go ahead with the STAR TREK feature?

It was a combination of things, of which that was just one factor. Five years ago, Paramount began looking at the remarkable rerun of the STAR TREK series—and they began to say, "Well, gee, maybe we *do* have something here." And it resulted in, four years ago, my checking into the studio with the idea of putting together a STAR TREK feature. At the time, the plan was just to do a modest-budget feature; and they were convinced they had a sufficient audience. But we couldn't come up with a script that Paramount really liked. Paramount wasn't that much into science fiction at the time. I think a lot of studios at the time had a rather simplistic view of science fiction—rocket ships and blasters and high adventure—the kinds of things that, really, you saw in STAR WARS, though probably with a few more half-nude women. I just wasn't interested in doing a space pirate type of show—a film is just too great an exertion of time and energy. The concepts I was working in and trying to get by at the same time had some fairly complex and, I thought, daring thematic material. And that just kind of shook them up, because they weren't thinking of science fiction as being a really heavy thematic thing. So they weren't too satisfied with our early feature scripts, and we final-



Above: Filming Captain Kirk (William Shatner) as he briefs over 300 crewmembers in the recreation deck on the nature of their latest mission. Shooting is being done in both 35 and 70mm formats for later matching with 70mm effects shots.



ly ended up starting to do it as a spectacular for television to open up a new series.

But about that time, STAR WARS did come along and showed that there was, indeed, not only the audience that they thought might be there, but a rather unusual-sized one at that. So they started looking at the feature idea again, and they brought me a list of directors. Bob Wise and I had met about four years previous at a seminar at the University of Arizona, and we ended up having a drink together saying, "It'd be fun to do a science fiction film together someday." So, when I saw his name on the list, I said, "Wow, if we can get him, we can really do something." So with him, and with the STAR WARS grosses that were coming in every day, the thing began to assume its proper proportions. But it was not that Paramount said, "Well, STAR WARS is making money; let's do a science fiction." They have been moving toward it for a number of years. Not fast enough to suit me, nor with a large-enough budget, but they were moving.

What were some of the heavy thematic concepts you referred to ?

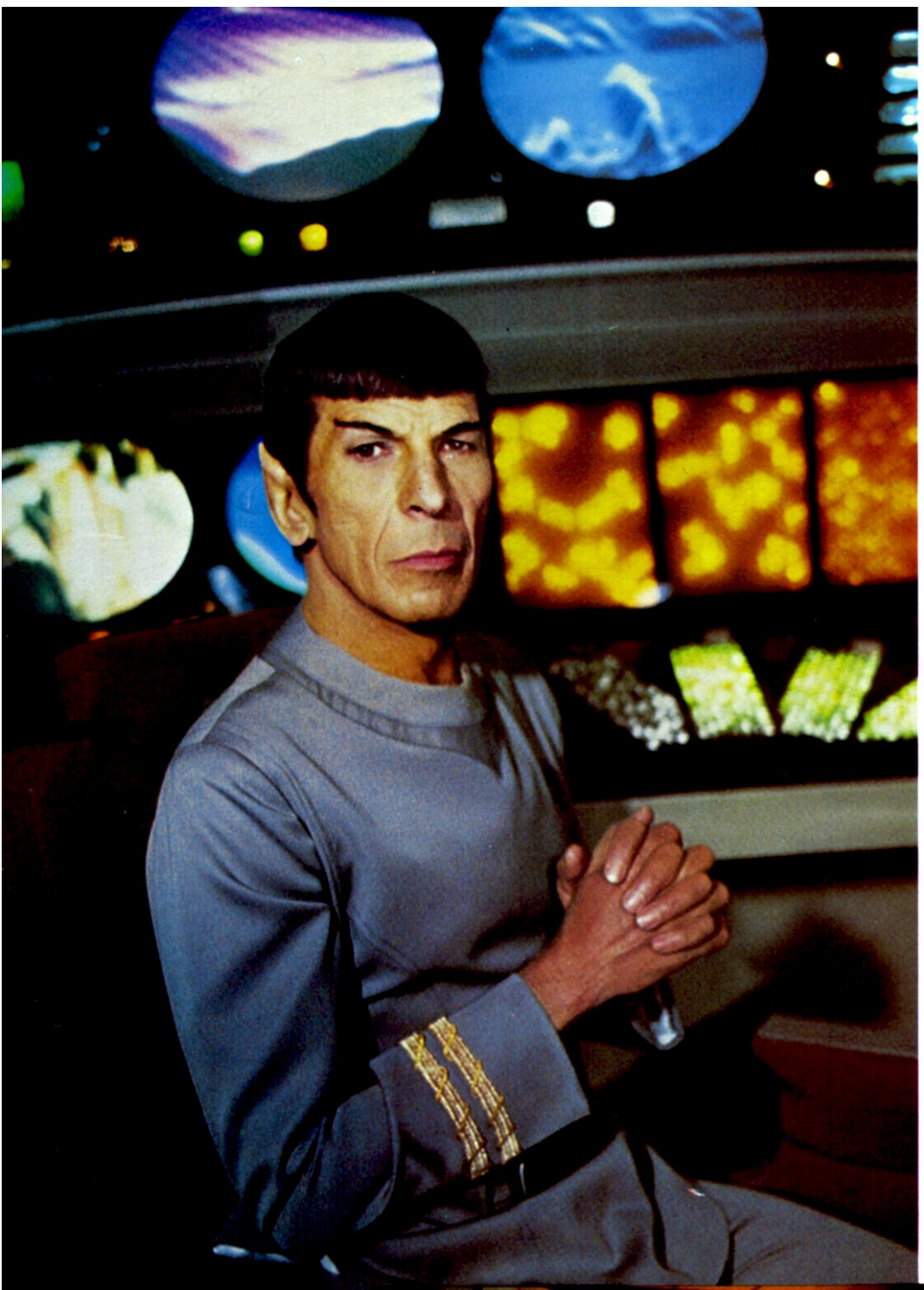
Well, in one of the early scripts, I wanted to suggest that there may have been, at one time in the human beginning, an alien entity that early man believed was God, and kept those legends. But I also wanted to suggest that it might have been as much the Devil as it was God. After all, what kind of god would throw humans out of Paradise for eating the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge ? And I had, in one of my ideas, a Vulcan saying to them, "You know, this god of yours that makes you fall on your belly every seventh day and worship him—that sounds like a very insecure personality to us." Not surprisingly, that didn't send the Paramount executives off crying with glee. But I think good science fiction, historically, has been used that way—to question *everything*. And in the film we do have some questioning and thematic material blended into the drama and action, but not laid on so heavily that the studio found it threatening.

I'll admit I probably do tend to write for myself a little bit; and maybe sometimes I forget there's a mass audience out there. But I do think that that audience is a lot brighter than anyone gives them credit for being. All of us in science fiction, or those of us who have read it, know that science fiction also includes Huxley and Swift and so many others; but those who are not tend to think only of *Buck Rogers* and *Flash Gordon*. So you think you're talking about the same thing; but really, you're not.

Is this, essentially, the same story you were working on for the television feature ?

Essentially, it's the same story we had settled on for the two-hour TV opener, yes. But of course, it was rewritten very completely, and in much greater depth, to make better use of the types of things we could do in a movie.

You managed to reassemble the entire cast from the television series, despite Leonard Nimoy's well-publicized insistence that he would not play Spock again. What



changed his mind ?

Leonard didn't want to do it as a TV thing. He was on Broadway and he was doing other things and I understood that. He just didn't want to get back into that 12-hour-a-day TV schedule again. But when we finally decided to make it a movie, and a top-quality movie, then the way was eased and we came to an agreement.

Did you plan to cast another actor as Spock, or were you planning to write him out of the script ?

We toyed back and forth. Should we just get a fine actor and let him play Spock—which might possibly have worked—or should we eliminate the character completely ? Finally, when Leonard said, "I will not do television—period," we decided to write in another character. And it was a young Vulcan named Xon. We even cast the part, and it was a great disappointment to that young actor when we came along and made it a movie and Leonard came back.

Can you tell us a bit about your new characters ?

There are two main ones. One of them is our navigator—we moved Chekov from navigator to weapons defense, which is a prominent station and an important one on the bridge. Anyway, I'd been thinking for some years of using a lady who came from an evolved planet where they had no hair. I'd seen a statue of Nefertiti—the Egyptian queens used to shave their heads so they could wear the male wigs—and it was just a stunning look. And I thought if I could get the right woman with the right head it would be very effective. Well, obviously we couldn't ask women to come in and shave their heads just for a test, but we looked at a lot of actresses, and as a result, ended up getting Persis Khambatta who came in and tried out for the TV version. Coming from India as she did. she had sort of an off-center, alien way of phrasing her words. Even her movements reflected a different culture. Plus the fact that she just looked lovely in the skullcap plastered-down hair thing we did. And she was willing to shave her head for the role. So when Bob Wise came on, we looked her over again and said, "Yes, she's still right for the movie." And I think she's going to come off as a very powerful personality in it.

Her name is Ilia, and she comes from a planet called Delta. I did ten pages on Deltan background that'll never appear in

Above: Science officer Spock (Leonard Nimoy) at his station on the Enterprise. Nimoy was not to have joined the cast when the proposal was for a TV series, but signed when the project became a feature film production. Mr. Spock's computer machinery is now much more expansive than in the original design used in the television series. Right: William Shatner as Captain Kirk as he appeared in the popular NBC-TV series. The original bridge design has been revamped in order to look more spacious and reflect a larger budget.



Top: Director Robert Wise puts Shatner, Kelley and Nimoy through their paces. Bottom: The Enterprise officers line up, left to right: Chekhov (Walter Koenig), Scott (James Doohan), Spock (Leonard Nimoy), Nurse Chapel (Majel Barrett), Kirk (William Shatner), Yeoman Rand (Grace Lee Whitney), McCoy (DeForrest Kelley), Uhura (Nichelle Nichols) and Sulu (George Takei). Costume designer Robert Fletcher has updated the look of the crew's costumes, closer in concept to SPACE: 1999 than the designs for the original STAR TREK TV series, adopted for its less flambouyant color scheme. Roddenberry felt Bill Theiss' original costume designs were now too colorful and garish.



STAR TREK EFFECTS UPDATE "The Trouble With Abel's"

In the formative days of the STAR TREK feature, it is probable that the Paramount executives recognized that anything less than first-rate special effects would severely hamper the box-office potential of the multi-million dollar space epic. It is also likely that they counted heavily on the services of special effects expert Douglas Trumbull—a fairly natural assumption considering Trumbull's Future General Corporation was a subsidiary of Paramount Pictures.

In the closing months of the STAR TREK negotiations, Trumbull was at work finishing up CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND. And presumably for reasons similar to those which led him to decline to helm the STAR WARS special effects, Trumbull turned down STAR TREK. He was, however, a key interface with Paramount in the selection of an alternative. The contract for special effects was awarded to Robert Abel and Associates, a prestigious firm whose TV commercials for Pepsi Cola and Levi Strauss number among the most visually spectacular ever to grace the video screen. Meanwhile, Trumbull prepared a demo reel utilizing his new film innovation, Super 70, and sat back to await Paramount's decision on whether or not they intended to launch a full-blown feature using the process. Paramount turned thumbs-down and instead put Future General in mothballs—a move judged by some as a slap at Trumbull for passing on STAR TREK, and an incentive for his laid-off technicians to join the Abel organization. Many did.

However, in recent months (and since our Gene Roddenberry interview went to press), unverified reports began to appear in the trade journals suggesting that all was not well between Paramount and Robert Abel, and that Douglas Trumbull was stepping into the picture. Finally an abrupt announcement revealed that due to "creative differences," Paramount and Abel had mutually agreed to sever their pact. Although no official explanation was given, it is broadly held throughout the industry that Abel had fallen behind schedule and that the demands for extensive effects needed for a full feature production had proven too much for him. Explained one of the effects technicians close to the production, "Abel wanted to get a million dollars worth of equipment and on-the-job training. I don't think Abel's staff was aware that production has to go on. They were testing stuff for a year and I don't think anything was built, miniatures or otherwise. Then the picture had production art director Harold Michelson and Abel had his own art director. It was a duplication of roles and there was so much conflict." Gene Roddenberry's press spokesman declined to confirm that Doug Trumbull had taken over, indicating that as a Paramount executive, Trumbull was naturally playing a key role in the transition.

Little or none of Robert Abel's work will appear in the picture (nor will his credit), and although an official replacement has yet to be named, it is clear that Douglas Trumbull is playing a large role at this point. Trumbull reassembled most of the creative team that worked for him on CLOSE ENCOUNTERS, including effects director of photography Richard Yuricich and his brother, matte painter Matthew Yuricich. The Future General facilities are in operation once again, and Trumbull's technicians are splitting their time between STAR TREK effects and some additional work for the revised and expanded re-release of CLOSE ENCOUNTERS next February. John Dykstra and his Apogee company including Robert Shepherd and model maker Grant McCune have been brought in as a major sub-contractor in order to complete the needed effects for STAR TREK's December 7, 1979 release deadline. □

the film, just to help her consolidate her feelings on the part. Deltans are so much more evolved than the human species; and they have to take an oath of chastity when they come aboard a human starship, because in their evolved state, they handle sex so much more expertly than we do that if she were to have sex with a human male it would shake him up so much it would practically make him unfit for duty. So, we do get a little touch of sex into the film—at least, talking about it. But we'll be G-rated; so unfortunately, we won't be showing any of those things. But you know, the way I feel about sex is it's as much a part of life as anything else, and science fiction so often just ignores it entirely. And I kind of like the idea of a planet where they view it so naturally, and with such affection, that they kind of shock even our 23rd-century Puritan instincts.

So Ilia works out nicely. I wanted another woman on the bridge, and I wanted another alien. My problem was that although I believe in sexual equality, we were getting back all of our original actors, and I couldn't very well say to George Takei, "Okay, George, you're out—we're going to get a Japanese girl this time." So we just shuffled things around a bit and opened the bridge to women.

The other new character is the executive officer, Will Decker. Decker was assigned to take command of the *Enterprise* when it finished its refitting, but because they needed a captain and a crew that could just step right in and be a harmonious unit, he was made executive officer and was, in effect, demoted. So he begins showing considerable conflict with Kirk. In the end, of course, they find that probably their main problem is that they're just too much alike. Steve Collins is playing the part. He's a fine actor, and he gives us a little youth in our bridge crew.

Do you have any other alien-type crewmembers ?

Yes. And I'd hoped we could feature them a little more, but we ended up devoting so much time and attention to the regular STAR TREK characters that we didn't. But we do see quite a number of them there on the ship, and down in San Francisco in Starfleet headquarters.

Is there anything really remote from humanoid ?

Primarily variations on the humanoid. If you want to do a *real* alien, and get away from two arms, two legs, and that sort of stuff, it is *so* expensive, and such a risk—to not come off as camp—that we decided to stick with the humanoid. Probably in San Francisco you'll see some humanoid fish-like creatures who breathe in water and have to wear a water tank on their head, very much as we wear an oxygen one in space. But that'll be about as far as we go. If we were doing camp, we could have gotten away with the sort of thing you saw in STAR WARS, which was fun. But if you decide you're going to do it straight, then it gets really, really touchy. You really feel you have to stop and explain and see a little more—and that would have interfered with our story.

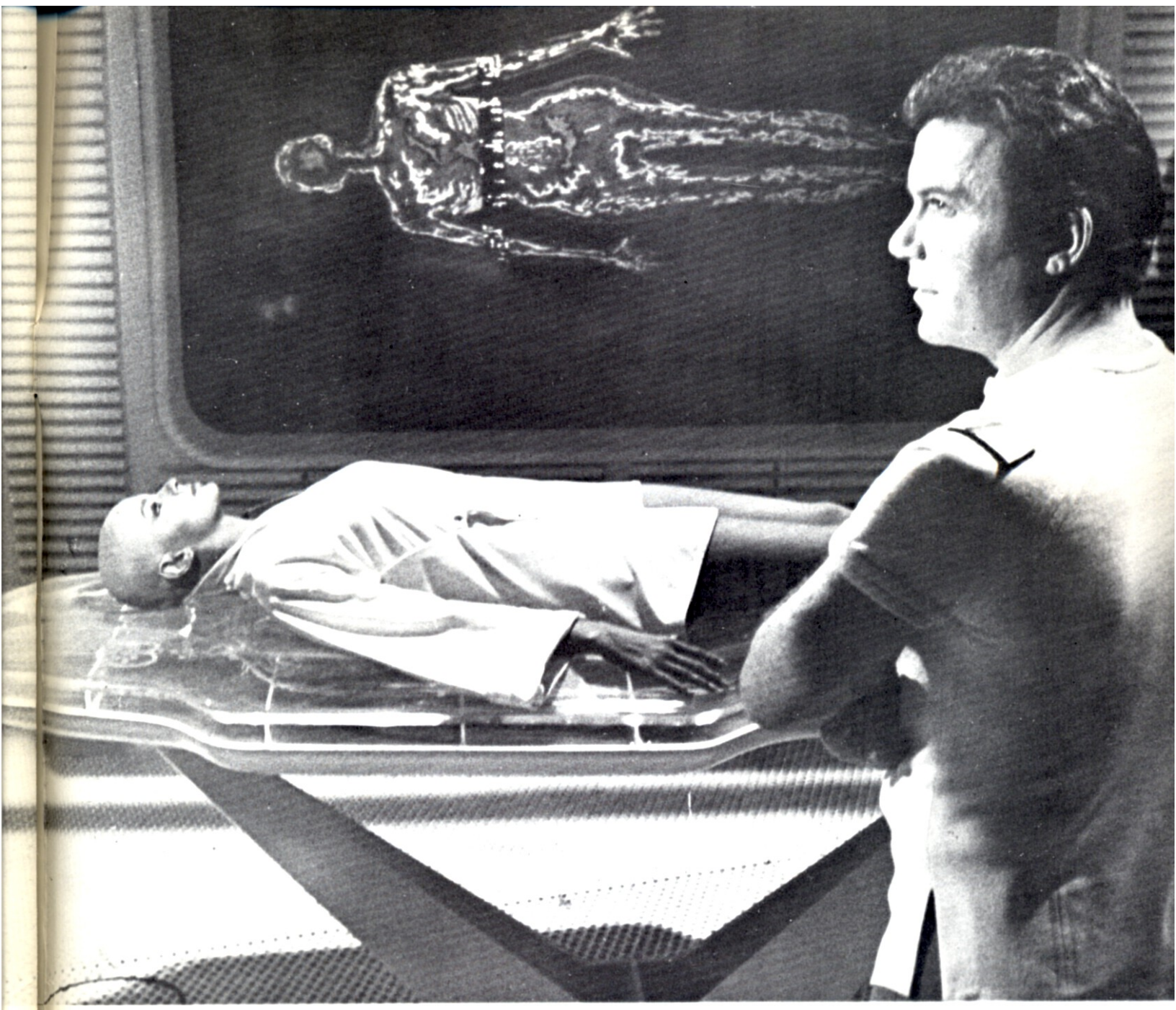
What sorts of special effects can we look forward to ?

Some pretty outstanding ones. Certainly, we're aiming at special effects that are the equivalent of anything you saw in CLOSE ENCOUNTERS and STAR WARS.



Above: Kirk and Spock look-in as Ilia (Persis Khambatta), the new navigator of the Enterprise, undergoes a full body scan in Dr. McCoy's sickbay. Ilia is a sensual, hairless female from the planet Delta. "Fascinating," says Mr. Spock.

And hopefully, since this is the state of the art three years later, a little more. We'll have the basic spacecraft footage, of course, but there will also be some very complex optical effects on the vessel itself. For instance, the vessel will be visited by some—for want of a better word—"things" which could only be done with optical effects. And then some of the things the *Enterprise* gets caught in, like warps in space and time, require optical effects on the bridge; because as you start warping time, the very look of people sitting there, and how they move and so on, is going to be affected. So, we have some very exciting sequences. But never at any time will you sit back and say, "Ah, they're giving me a light show." Or, "They figured the picture was getting dull, so they just threw in this



monstrous effect." The effects are all carefully worked into the film.

How did you decide upon Robert Abel and Associates for your special effects work ? I understand that at one point you tried to get Douglas Trumbull.

No, Doug was never available; but he was in business with Paramount and sort of served as our advisor on picking special effects people. So it was through him, and others, that we finally picked Abel. We knew the things that he had done, and we knew the quality of the people he had with him—people like Con Pederson, who was a very key man on 2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY, and Richard Taylor, who is one of the finest design artists in the country. And there are people up there with him who had worked on STAR WARS and CLOSE ENCOUNTERS. So it got us the kind of group we wanted on the show. What you basically look for is what is in the minds of these people. What is their taste ? Do they have the daring to try new things ? And indeed, these people do. As a result, just as producer and director sometimes get involved in opticals, they also become involved in our areas. There was a time in pictures when you sort of compartmentalized everything—and the optical people you called on the phone and sent them your film and they delivered something that you either accpeted or you didn't. But now, the inter-workings are very, very close. They've sat in on our story conferences and been involved in *all* levels of what we do, just as we get involved in all levels of what they do. Either Abel or one of his representatives is always there whenever we shoot a shot that will involve effects; and on some of the more complex ones, they actually take over the cameras.

Assuming STAR TREK is a tremendous success, where do you go from there ?

If this feature should be a success, then I see no reason why we couldn't go on the same way the James Bond movies do, and have sequel STAR TREKs which would really be fun.

Have you any ideas for future films ?

There are a lot of interesting shows we could do. I'd like to do one where we could really get into the Klingon Empire. I personally never liked the Klingons too much. They were invented by one of our writers during the first year, and other writers picked up on them because it's easier to write if you can have a villain. But we never got into them. I always wanted to do a story where we penetrated the Klingon Empire and saw why they are the way they are, and gave legitimate reasons. I never liked villains who were bad just because they wore black and had mustaches. But we couldn't afford to do that on TV—we just didn't have the money to get into the whole Klingon culture thing. But in a sequel movie, we could really get into the Klingon Empire; and with a motion picture budget, we could make it a believable, layered thing. In a way, it could be reminiscent of some of the best of Burroughs. I'd also like one day to bring STAR TREK back to the Seventies—back into our own era. That could be very exciting. □

